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456pp. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Ardis.
0 88233 449 2

KATERINA CLARK:
The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual
293pp. Chicago University Press.
0 225 10766 3

Soviet literature is a strange and fascinating spectacle for Western observers. All those authors, to start with: eight thousand of them in the Writers' Union, and thousands more free-lancing, writing in the Soviet Union's dozens of languages with the prospect of generous print runs and a secure standard of living. The political leadership seems to take them seriously, to judge by the occasional cause célèbre which bursts into the Western (but not the Soviet) press. And the Soviet public actually reads them, to judge by the speed with which their best works disappear from the bookshops. Would that Western writers could say the same. And yet these same Soviet writers are subject to a formidably repressive system of censorship and political control, which makes it uncommonly difficult to attain to a standard higher than tedious mediocrity. Their best works may take years of exhausting struggle to publish - or may never reach the broad Soviet public at all, but dribble out in faded typescript copies, to be published eventually by an émigré establishment abroad. How do writers survive at all in these conditions? And go on writing? And what do they think they are trying to achieve?

These are questions which are tackled, in different ways, by each of these three books. One of the problems seems to be that literature is in the last 'cottage industry' in the Soviet Union. To be sure, writers have been collectivized in a formal sense in the Writers' Union. But the actual operation of writing still has to be carried on by the lone individual at his desk, and the end result, the book, though it may be printed in a hundred thousand copies, is still basically an individual product, of a kind which Soviet ideologists and production managers find difficult to fit into their 'plan'. Yes, ideologists too, because even the message or outlook of a work is supposed to be acceptable to the collective. Before publication, every typescript passes through dozens of hands, and has individual quirks progressively ironed out.

Edith Rogovin Frankel in *Novy Mir: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature, 1952-58* examines the life of the basic ideological and production unit in Soviet literature, the 'thick journals'. In the West these venerable compilations, with their mixture of poetry, prose, criticism, reviews and social commentary went out with the nineteenth century. In Russia, however, they survived, and indeed were revived after the Revolution, because they seemed to suit the spirit of the times: writers liked to band together in like-minded groups, for mutual encouragement and protection, and in order to compete for official patronage, without which even the best of them could starve. Even when groups were suppressed and one all-embracing Writers' Union was created, these journals were still useful, both for their characteristic synthesis of literature and politics, and as a preliminary filter in the cumbersome process of official literary supervision.

With the diversification of cultural life in the 'thaw' (which, as Frankel shows, slightly preceded Stalin's death and continued after it), journals reverted once again to the 'group spirit', acting for writers and critics as a 'family group', as sociologists call the informal mutual protection coteries which set a limit to the power of the would-be totalitarian state. The most celebrated example of this kind was *Novy Mir* in the 1950s and 60s, when, under its chief editors, Alexander Tvardovsky and Konstantin Simonov, it acted as a bastion of what Grigori Svirski in his introductory chapter calls the 'literature of moral resistance'. In the process the journal went through many vicissitudes, including the dismissal of Tvardovsky in 1954, and his return following the dismissal of

Simonov in 1958. Of the two, Frankel clearly has more respect for Tvardovsky, whom she regards as a man with his own programme and devoted to the interests of his 'family', whereas Simonov, having sponsored a 'thaw' which seemed to be in line with party policy in 1956, subsequently took fright and made 1957 one of the most colourless years in the journal's history. Frankel argues persuasively that Tvardovsky's return signalled the party's desire to establish a *modus vivendi* with the more liberal writers.

Frankel interviewed some of the former editors of *Novy Mir*, in order to give a rounded picture of the way the journal functioned as a social organism. She rebuts Solzhenitsyn's accusation (from *The Calf and the Oak*) that Tvardovsky was an aloof autocrat, out of touch with the other editors, the staff and the writers. On the contrary, she holds that Tvardovsky would make himself available to all who wanted to see him, that editorial meetings were informal and spontaneous, and that he enormously valued, in practice as well as in theory, the democratic spirit of the journal.

This spirit was the crucial factor in *Novy Mir*'s success. That was what gave the journal an *esprit de corps*, attracted writers to write for it, and induced readers to subscribe to it. Writers, apparently, would frequently drop in to discuss burning issues of the day, knowing that there they would find sympathetic and intelligent listeners. Frankel does not, however, really attempt to define what this spirit was, beyond noting that the 'family group' was unified by 'certain qualities of liberalism, of *porjadoknosc*' (which means 'decency', but transposed from the English public-school milieu to that of the progressive Russian intelligentsia). Works which were of high quality but did not conform to the journal's philosophy would be rejected (wholly understandable, but indicative of the way in which 'family groups' set up their own embryonic censorship). Solzhenitsyn was annoyed by this, and in his memoirs accused *Novy Mir* of following what was in effect only a slight variant of party orthodoxy. There is something in that charge, but *Novy Mir* in fact represented a very particular strand in the varied skein of Marxist-Leninist literary

practice. Tvardovsky (and Lakshin, perhaps the most talented literary critic on his staff) particularly valued Belinsky, Nekrasov and the nineteenth-century radical democratic tradition. Like these forerunners, Tvardovsky believed that literature had a duty, through the truthful and critical reporting of social reality, to contribute to man's moral improvement and to help him build a more humane society. That is what moved Tvardovsky to value Solzhenitsyn's early work so highly, and to fight for its publication. For the same reasons, Tvardovsky remained fundamentally a realist in literary outlook; he had no liking for experimental stylistic techniques, and generally possessed a surer taste for narrative verse and prose than for lyric poetry. It would have been interesting to see in more detail how these attitudes were reflected in the variety of materials that appeared in *Novy Mir*.

One would also have liked Frankel to continue her study into the 1960s. This period was no less important in the life of the journal: until Tvardovsky's enforced resignation in 1970 it often fought single-handed to maintain the values of the 'thaw'. The 1960s are, moreover, less well covered in the existing literature. Much of Frankel's chapter on the 'literary process', which is well done, is in fact drawn from this later period. She assembles from a variety of sources impressions of the way in which a typescript passes through the stages of review, editorial consideration, censorship and, in controversial cases, discussion in one of the sections of the Writers' Union. It emerges quite clearly from her account that the people who run literature are the writers - or at least that sub-category among them who are entrusted by the Party Central Committee's Cultural Department with the job of administering literature. 'Administering literature' - a terrible phrase! But it is essential in a collective society. What it means is taking decisions about what to publish, whom to reward with subsidies, advances, paid holidays or trips abroad and other such official perks. Being reliant on the party's patronage for their income and status, the literary bureaucrats (most of whom, though not quite all, are third-rate writers at best) are cautious about publishing anything that might cause trouble. It was they who finally

prevented the publication of Solzhenitsyn's *Cancer Ward* after it had been accepted by *Novy Mir* and approved by the prose section of the Writers' Union. Moscow branch (which contains a fair proportion of real writers).

Novy Mir, then, was no typical journal: on the contrary, it was the critical example which tested the working of the whole system. By examining it in the context of the 'literary process', Professor Frankel, even though she does not cover her whole subject, makes a valuable contribution to our understanding.

Grigori Svirski in *A History of Post-war Soviet Writing: The Literature of Moral Opposition* has a much broader canvas. He takes an extreme view of the struggle: real literature in totalitarian conditions is 'partisan warfare'.

His study is autobiography as well as literary history, and it begins with the young Svirski himself in 1946, newly demobbed from the Red Army, walking past the statue of Rodin's Thinker in the courtyard of the Writers' Union building to attend a seminar at which one of his own works was to be discussed. The whole book is permeated by the idealism of that moment, the idealism of the men who had won a great victory over evil on the battlefield, and had now returned home to achieve the same on the campaign trails of the spirit. Such young men regarded the Soviet leadership as standing for the same basic ideals as themselves, but they were already indignantly aware of that leadership's harshness and authoritarianism, its misuse of privilege, its lavish squandering of manpower both in war and in peace. During the years which followed, if we are to believe Svirski, both their idealism and their moral revulsion intensified; they were sickened by the resumption of Stalinist terror, the deportation of whole nationalities, the campaigns against 'cosmopolitans', Jews and 'decadent' writers. The result was moral warfare, between literary bureaucrats anxious to suppress the truth and writers fighting to reveal it.

The story is a gripping one, and there is much to be said for Svirski's approach. Particularly valuable are his portraits of the 'hatchet-men', as he calls the writers and pseudo-writers who 'administer' literature. In

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In pursuit of the past

By Julian Symons

ROSS MACDONALD:
Self-Portrait: Ceaselessly Into The Past
131pp. Santa Barbara: Capra Press.
\$15.
0 88496 170 2

When Kenneth Millar was born in California in 1915, his father John wrote a Scots dialect poem to celebrate the occasion, a poem that began:

December's glaur was thick the morn
That Jock and Nanny's bairn was born.
His name was Kenneth.

Four years later Jock, a harbour pilot stationed in Vancouver (the retreat from Canada to California was brief), a local newspaper editor, a man ready to pass half the morning explaining Indian signs to a casual visitor, parted from the bairn's mother. She took Kenneth to her home territory in Ontario and there he was brought up, as what he calls "a persistent visitor" in the homes of friends and relatives. The threat of an orphanage was averted when Jock's cousin took the six-year-old boy into his home, but he was always on the move. After graduation from high school Kenneth counted the rooms he had lived in during his first sixteen years, and reached a total of fifty. He had begun to write verse

and fiction before reaching his teens, and in due time published thrillers and crime stories, first in his own name, and eventually under that of Ross Macdonald.

Self-Portrait is a collection of pieces written over nearly twenty years. Some are related to Macdonald's interest in ecology, and concern such matters as the Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969 and a projected new road that would have affected local condors, but most are introductions to collections of crime stories. The pieces have been chosen with skill and edited with tact by the author's friend Ralph Sipper, and as Eudora Welty says in a foreword, they contain a strong autobiographical element. They are, indeed, the nearest thing to an autobiography we are likely to get. The illness that affects Macdonald has, at least for the visible future, brought his writing life to an end. This short book is extremely informative about the pressures that have produced his novels.

Most of them since *The Galton Case* (1959) have concerned a broken family and a lost father, and to this aspect of his early life the articles return again and again. One might expect that Kenneth would feel bitterly about the father whose departure left the family in penury, but that is not the case. Jock is mentioned with pride as a fine swimmer and wrestler, a man of medium size who could lift a half-ton weight, a poet and dreamer. "The happiest day of my childhood if not my life" was

the one when the boy's father took him out in a harbour boat "and I stood beside him in the offshore light, with his hands and my hand on the wheel". Young Kenneth Millar felt much more tenderness for his father who left him than for the mother who stayed, and the significance of *The Galton Case* for the author was that it represented the emergence in his fiction of "the epic theme of a lost father". Work on the book was stimulated by the chance that Millar's friend Donald Davie, who lived nearby, was using a similar theme for a poem. If one reads the later books, roughly half Macdonald's output, with this theme in mind, the repetitions of it become obvious. For several years, as he has been playing variations on the same basic tale. Most writers, he says, work out of their obsessions, and certainly that is true in his own case. To produce a work of fiction is "to struggle with demons, to get them under control. . . . I mean problems, memories, or whatever else makes up one's psychic life".

With the appearance of *The Goodbye Look* in 1969, Macdonald was hailed in his own country as a major novelist, a writer whose "worth and quality surpass the limitations of the form", to quote one review typical of many. Yet he has always respected the crime story as forms, as Eudora Welty says. A mystery must be created, and interest maintained in readers who mostly ask for no more than an undemanding tale of crime and retribution. These are problems

for any writer trying to extend the boundaries of the crime story - Chandler, Highsmith, Nicolas Freeling, even Sayers in *Gaudy Night* - and each finds a different answer. In Macdonald's case "I sacrifice, if sacrifice is the word, everything to those two requirements" of holding the reader's attention by surprising turns of plot, and concealing what has actually happened.

In England Macdonald has received little serious critical regard, being viewed as a rather faint carbon-copy of Hammett and Chandler. Yet the differences are greater than the similarities, how much greater may be seen by comparing Philip Marlowe with Lew Archer. Marlowe "is the hero, he is everything", in Chandler's words. Archer, as Macdonald says here more than once, is not the central character, nor the main object of interest, in the books where he appears. He is simply the man to whom people talk, the surveyor discovering the crack in the family's apparently irrefragably sound building. This was not always true. If one looks at early and late Archer it is plain that Macdonald has consciously tried to reduce the detective's importance and eliminate him as a personality, so that he shall not stand between the reader and the books' real subject, the rediscovery of the past.

It would be foolish not to admit that there have been losses, as well as gains, in Macdonald's single-minded pursuit of the past during the thirty-odd years that he and his wife the crime novelist Margaret Miller have spent in the haven of Santa Barbara. The early books do show debts to Hammett and Chandler, but they have a verve and an audacity in the use of simile and metaphor that is restricted, almost placed in cold storage, in the later ones. *The Way Some People Die* and *The Ivory Grist*

are particularly exciting and enjoyable. But as Macdonald has said himself, the blaze of youth does not last. "One writes . . . on the back of torn-off calendar sheets", and the later stories are immensely more subtle and serious. At times the symbolism is too insistent, like the forest fire in *The Underground Man*, "much like the Coyote Canyon fire that threatened Santa Barbara", Mr Sipper tells us, that is reflected in the purgative fire burning out the secrets of the Broadhurst family. Yet the opening of *The Blue Hammer*, which casually mentions "the towers of the mission and the courthouse half submerged in smog", most delicately suggests the mists and confusions through which Archer will look for the truth about Richard Chantry's missing painting.

This last, or most recent, novel is in some ways the peak of Macdonald's achievement, bringing to the unravelling of past guilts much of the sparkle in the early work. A choice of books that suggest his range as crime writer and novelist might include the early ones already mentioned, together with *The Zebra-Striped Hearse* and *Black Money*, two of his own favourites, plus *The Far Side of the Dollar* and *The Blue Hammer*. When one sees the increasing skill, subtlety and sense of purpose shown in the course of Macdonald's writing, it is obvious that he has had in England much less than his due of praise. He stated his intentions in an interview given several years ago: "I've been trying to put into my books the same sorts of things that a reader finds in a general novel, a whole version of life in our society and in our time. Of course, my books are somewhat limited by the kind of structure and subject matter that is inherent in the contemporary detective novel. I seem to work best within such limitations."

A sentimental education

By Vivian Mercier

MONK GIBBON:
The Pupil
A Memory of Love
121pp. Dublin: Wolfhound Press. 68 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1. 26.
0 905473 68 X

Let me say at once that this is a remarkable book. In his preface, Monk Gibbon writes: "It belongs to 'the thirties'. Viewed in the perspective of 'the eighties', it may seem strange and unreal." If that is so, then the strangeness only adds to its charm; perhaps few memoirs - or novels - published in 1981 will prove more haunting.

Mr Gibbon has never published a novel, but *The Pupil*, like *The Seals* (1935), employs the structure of fiction, along with the texture of memoir, to such an extent that concepts useful in the criticism of fiction - the implied reader and even the unreliable narrator - can be usefully applied to it. All the "faults" that orthodox critics of fiction might object to are present, but in practice they matter little. Digressions on the nature of love and the practice of education are, anyway, acceptable in first-person memoirs, and therefore in memoir-novels such as Proust's. As for the peculiar intimacy, almost coyness, with which Gibbon addresses his implied reader, it turns out to be a fairly happy accident. An appended Note tells us:

The Pupil . . . is based upon lengthy entries in my journal, made at the time or shortly afterwards. The years passed and when I began to write the narrative, I put it . . . although it was an entirely truthful confession . . . into the mouth of a fictional character who related the events to a friend.

Gibbon later wisely eliminated this artificial distancing, but vestiges of it remain. Of the piece of writing which first convinced him that the Pupil (Anne de Selincourt) really possessed the touch of genius he so badly wanted her to show, he writes: "I still have it. I see you are smiling to think that I have kept it all these years." This makes sense in the original context, where the narrator is speaking to a friend who is present; addressed to a reader, it seems the antithesis of distancing.

At times the implied reader is treated as if he or she were more cynical, as well as more worldly-wise and less emotionally susceptible, than Gibbon himself; why else would he protest so often that what he felt for Anne (aged fourteen when he was first attracted to her) was "love" not "sexual tenderness"?

Love is, as I have probably said already, the discovery of an unexpected and exceptional value in a particular individual. And it may, of course, find its natural expression in sexual tenderness. But not necessarily so. . . . It is this distinction between two linked elements to which our epoch tends to remain so obstinately blind. . . . But an obsession with the persona of another individual is an altogether different thing [from a physical urge]. That my feelings about Anne were wholly innocuous only made the preoccupation all the more baffling and perhaps all the more compelling.

On the whole it is more pleasant for a reader faced with this subject to be told "You are not as I" than to be greeted by Humbert Humbert as orthodox critics of fiction might object to be present, but in practice they matter little. Digressions on the nature of love and the practice of education are, anyway, acceptable in first-person memoirs, and therefore in memoir-novels such as Proust's. As for the peculiar intimacy, almost coyness, with which Gibbon addresses his implied reader, it turns out to be a fairly happy accident. An appended Note tells us:

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view about the role of love in second and third-level education:

I was not certain by any means that I was doing her a service in taking a special interest in her. . . . Had I really done her a disservice by helping her to cultivate her sensibility? Was sensitivity her enemy rather than her friend and should I have been at some pains to immunise her against it?

As a life-long teacher of adolescents or children, Gibbon refuses to contemplate the possibility that pupils might fall in love with him. (Universally teaching, especially at the post-graduate level, forces one to accept that possibility, though most of the time one doesn't see what is going on until it's over. The result is usually ironic.)

Nevertheless, Gibbon rather closely resembles our Jamesian (and Fordian) friend, the unreliable narrator. His memoir keeps us in a state of pleasurable tension, just as a good novel does, until the aesthetic resolution on the penultimate page: Anne, now in her thirties and married nearly fifteen years, kisses her old teacher for the first time, on the mouth. Friends deride him home . . . in a state of bemused happiness. . . . I kept thinking, so she did like you a little. She must have done so to have kissed you on the lips as she did. This is not the language of a poet but the guarded banality of an Irish Protestant, an ex-officer and a gentleman. Could he not say, "She loved me" in plain prose, or better still write a poem? Like Dante in the *Vita Nuova*, Monk Gibbon has already given us several of his own poems, including at least one inspired by Anne, "Love's Cure", which begins "I was loved . . .". It would be absurd for him to claim, in his eighty-sixth year, that he is no longer capable of writing a poem.

Perhaps Anne's intense significance for Gibbon after so long lies in her having inspired the first poem he had written for more than a year. Happy marriage is a great silencer of poets. His prose, if not his poetry, has sometimes - in *The Seals* and now again in *The Pupil* - come very close to perfection. Anne's radiant image has enabled Monk Gibbon to evoke around her a school community, rides over the downs, and the Dorsetshire landscape, and escape in ways that make this a rich, many-sided book rather than the narrow record of an obsession.

spire the builders of socialism. Besides, its doctrines might lead writers to become too critical of Soviet society. So it was not on the whole RAPP which provided the exemplars of Socialist Realism. On the contrary, RAPP was closed down in 1932, along with all other literary groups, to be replaced by a single all-encompassing Union of Soviet Writers, with its own aesthetic doctrine of Socialist Realism. This claimed still to be concerned with "everyday reality", only now it mixed in a substantial dose of "revolutionary romanticism". Zhdanov, the keynote speaker at the first Writers' Union congress, called on writers to "combine the most matter-of-fact, everyday reality with the

Society as a whole was depicted in archaic rather than modern terms. In sociological language, Stalin's Russia was seen not as a *Gesellschaft*, bound by egalitarian, impersonal and instrumental ties, but rather a *Gemeinschaft*, held together by hierarchical, personal, even consecrated bonds. It was a kind of "great family", in which the wise and benevolent father was, of course, Stalin. The sons learnt from him, from his example as well as from the higher wisdom he mediated. The theory of the "quantitative leap forward" (derived from Engels) was used to justify the notion that ordinary human beings, having access through Stalin to the higher mysteries, could outbid the laws of nature

ism. One was back to the underlying heroic myth, struggled with real enemies and real struggle. This was the path taken by Vladimir Dudintsev, whose *Not by Bread Alone* (1956) shows an inventor from the people battling against conservative academics and industrial managers in the great cause of technological progress. The trouble was, this meant admitting that real enemies had survived in Soviet society, or had perhaps even been generated by it.

The other path forward was to ditch the myth altogether, to seek inspiration in Western models and in the experimental Russian literature of the 1910s and 20s, which had been buried under the Socialist Realism monolith. In this stream Clark mentions particularly the so-called "youth" writers, Vasily Aksyonov and Andrei Bitov.

The divergent tendencies of the 1950s and early 60s, together with somewhat relaxed party control, helped to generate what is today a much more diverse literary scene. Some novels, like the blockbusters of Alexander Chukovsky, still approximate to the Stalinist myth, though with far greater attention to specific historical detail and individual rôle. Some are quite close to what we in the West are accustomed to regard as fiction, with much of the complexity and ambiguity that implies. One common mood seems to be a realization that Soviet man has lost his way and therefore needs to delve back into his past to discover what went wrong and to resume the search for new directions. Especially interesting in this context are Clark's remarks on the vogue for rural fiction: she sees in it a partial revival of the aspiration of the 1930s for an organic, traditional *Gemeinschaft* in a natural setting. Now, however, freed of their incongruous association with the drive towards a new and technologically sophisticated society, these aspirations can be expressed in their pure form. Perhaps what is at work here is the desire to replace pseudo-myth with real myth, and "neo-religion" with traditional religious forms. At any rate, writers such as Vasily Belov, Valentin Rasputin and Chingis Aitmatov have recently been warning that technological progress (hitherto an obligatory element in official ideology) may actually be destructive unless it is accompanied by equivalent attention to men's spiritual needs. They imply, quite unambiguously to the normally sensitive reader, that these needs are better fulfilled in folk culture and traditional religion than in the superficial political ideologies of progress.

Clark's book suggests, then, that the practitioners of Stalinist Socialist Realism did not simply write what politicians dictated to them. There was a genuine literary content to a work, albeit of a derivative and artificial kind, and traditions on which they built were deeply rooted in Russian culture in ways which Clark meticulously analyses. They proceeded from the *zhilits* (lives of the saints), the *bylina* (folk epic), the criticism of Bolinsky and Dobrolyubov, and the fiction of Chernyshevsky, the Populists and Gorky. Following Yuri Lotman, Clark regards societies as, in part, information-processing systems, in which literature sends signals as well as receiving them. "The particular literary possibilities canonized in Socialist Realism were those that had power to interact with the new ideologies which had become dominant." Writers not only received instructions, then; they may in fact have helped to create the hyperbolic, mythical language in which much of the official discourse of the 1930s was couched. Perhaps they even helped to conjure up the ritualized atmosphere of the show trials, with their highly stylized villanelles. The "platform of untruth" of which Fadeyev complained was partly his own creation.

In its sure grasp of a huge subject, and in its speculative boldness, Professor Clark's study represents a major breakthrough. It sends one back to the original texts with a whole host of new questions, which the function of the best literary criticism. And it also helps us to understand the place of the "official" writer in that peculiar mixture of ideology, collective pressure and inspiration which is the Soviet literary process.

Perhaps under the pressure of this tension, the Stalinist novel began to lose its relative simplicity in the late 1940s. Stock figures and incidents from the "master plot" began to proliferate, so that each no longer had a clearly defined function. Real heroism and real struggle began to be replaced by a kind of pageantry, as though the essential victories had already been won, and the only conflicts left were those between the good and the better. As befitted a more stable and assured society, writers became increasingly preoccupied with questions of "culture", in the broad Russian sense of everyday life: well-being and civilized behaviour. Literature lost what elements of real folk creativity it had managed to retain. The earlier passages in Gladkov and Sholokhov were progressively bewildered with each succeeding edition, and up-and-coming young authors cultivated a formal, almost bureaucratic style. Stalinist baroque became, as it were, Stalinist rococo.

After Stalin's death, Clark argues, there seemed to be two possible ways out of petrified Socialist Real-



Lev Kopelev at Anna Akhmatova's grave in Komarovo, 1979; reproduced from Svirski's book reviewed here.

most heroic prospects"; and the emphasis was moving from the former to the latter, as Clark shows. Increasingly, in fiction, reality was presented no longer with painstaking exactitude, but in the light of its revolutionary development, which usually meant embellishing it in the spirit of current party propaganda, not tearing masks off, in fact, but keeping them on, and even touching them up.

The central figures of this new fiction were no longer little men, part of a mass, but exceptional people, "positive heroes", reminiscent of epic traditions. Coming from the common people, these "positive heroes" submitted their passionate and rebellious natures (their "spontaneity") to the wise teaching of the party and of Stalin personally ("consciousness"). The combination of nature and nurture produced mature and steadfast leaders of men, capable of guiding their followers to victory in the great battles military and industrial of socialist construction. They were often referred to as *bogatyri*, the knights of Russian medieval folk legend, clear-sighted and resourceful, indomitable in combat (whether against bureaucrats, shirkers, wreckers or real enemies) and capable of improbable feats of physical strength. "There are no strongholds which Bolsheviks cannot take by storm," said Stalin in 1931. This became the keynote of party-approved fiction, a spirit not of science and economic rationality, but of hyperbole and myth.

One might imagine that at least the action in Stalinist fiction would centre on industrial and technological themes, in keeping with the nature of socialist construction, as preached by the politicians. In fact, however, even here pre-modern myth kept breaking in: nature and the elements - fire, storm, flood and ice - formed the heroes far more than did the discipline of the construction site or the shop-floor. Nikolai Ostrovsky's steel was "tempered" by armed combat, hardship and illness, not by the blast-furnace; and although Oleg Koshovoi, the hero of Fadeyev's *Young Guard*, came from a mining town, he made his first emblematic appearance in the novel taming wild horses, and was subsequently never seen down the pit.

Clark's book suggests, then, that the practitioners of Stalinist Socialist Realism did not simply write what politicians dictated to them. There was a genuine literary content to a work, albeit of a derivative and artificial kind, and traditions on which they built were deeply rooted in Russian culture in ways which Clark meticulously analyses. They proceeded from the *zhilits* (lives of the saints), the *bylina* (folk epic), the criticism of Bolinsky and Dobrolyubov, and the fiction of Chernyshevsky, the Populists and Gorky. Following Yuri Lotman, Clark regards societies as, in part, information-processing systems, in which literature sends signals as well as receiving them. "The particular literary possibilities canonized in Socialist Realism were those that had power to interact with the new ideologies which had become dominant." Writers not only received instructions, then; they may in fact have helped to create the hyperbolic, mythical language in which much of the official discourse of the 1930s was couched. Perhaps they even helped to conjure up the ritualized atmosphere of the show trials, with their highly stylized villanelles. The "platform of untruth" of which Fadeyev complained was partly his own creation.

In its sure grasp of a huge subject, and in its speculative boldness, Professor Clark's study represents a major breakthrough. It sends one back to the original texts with a whole host of new questions, which the function of the best literary criticism. And it also helps us to understand the place of the "official" writer in that peculiar mixture of ideology, collective pressure and inspiration which is the Soviet literary process.

Perhaps under the pressure of this tension, the Stalinist novel began to lose its relative simplicity in the late 1940s. Stock figures and incidents from the "master plot" began to proliferate, so that each no longer had a clearly defined function. Real heroism and real struggle began to be replaced by a kind of pageantry, as though the essential victories had already been won, and the only conflicts left were those between the good and the better. As befitted a more stable and assured society, writers became increasingly preoccupied with questions of "culture", in the broad Russian sense of everyday life: well-being and civilized behaviour. Literature lost what elements of real folk creativity it had managed to retain. The earlier passages in Gladkov and Sholokhov were progressively bewildered with each succeeding edition, and up-and-coming young authors cultivated a formal, almost bureaucratic style. Stalinist baroque became, as it were, Stalinist rococo.

After Stalin's death, Clark argues, there seemed to be two possible ways out of petrified Socialist Real-

the 1930s, of course, and again after the war, this function implied more than just distributing or withholding the goodies: it actually meant advising the political authorities on whom to arrest. Here the key man was Alexander Fadeyev, General Secretary of the Writers' Union in the worst years. Svirski's picture of him is fascinating: sharing a bottle of vodka with a writer who he knew was to disappear, rifling the desk of another condemned colleague in order to remove his own letters to him, and thus avoid being caught up in the meshes of his own making. In April 1936, when some of those he had betrayed returned from the camps, Fadeyev made a speech in which he tried to exculpate himself by reference to the "group spirit" in which they had all lived, to the "platform of untruth" which had won over hearts and minds. But his audience sat in grim and contemptuous silence, and a month later Fadeyev shot himself. As an acquaintance remarked, "Nothing is so fatal to a man as a base deed committed in error." Or, as he is said to have remarked not long before his death: "I thought I was guarding a temple, but it turned out to have been a latrine."

Svirski's martial approach, in fact, works well enough for the period just after the war, and perhaps for the early "thaw" of the 1950s. But on the whole military history is not a good model for literary history. Battles normally have only two sides, and they are clearly distinguishable from one another. This fundamental over-simplification leads Svirski into confusion, especially when he treats of Russian nationalism. As a Jew - and one who has written vividly about the persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union - Svirski understandably views Russian nationalism as the enemy. But he then goes on to identify it with the other enemy, the literary bureaucrat. This makes it difficult for him to write coherently and with sympathy about those writers of "moral resistance" who are themselves motivated by some form of Russian nationalism. He is inclined to attribute such views to official influence on these writers, an attempt to buy them off or divert them from their real task of speaking the truth. Things are much more complex in reality. To start with, Russian nationalism is by no means generally acceptable as an official ideology in the party hierarchy, nor in the Writers' Union; many authoritative Soviet ideologists regard an imperial, multi-national Soviet patriotism as more desirable. Indeed, they consider the Russian variety deeply suspect ideologically, since it can lead to glorification of the pre-revolutionary past - and even of the Russian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, there are many varieties of Russian nationalism, from the gentle Solzhenitsynian kind, which seeks to pull Russia back from dominating other nations and to effect a "moral revolution", to red-blooded antisemitic and militarist chauvinism. Lumping them all together, and then identifying them with Stalin, leads to gross distortion. Svirski's characterization of the journal *Nashi Sovremenniki*, for example, as Stalinist is patently wrong: some of the sharpest criticisms of Stalin's policies, especially the mass collectivization of agriculture, have appeared in its pages.

Svirski seems, in fact, very ill at ease with the remarkable school of rural writers which arose in the 1960s, and to whom he actually devotes a full section of his book. On his account, it is very difficult to understand how these writers could make such radical criticisms of official rural policy and get them published. The only forerunner Svirski cites is Babel, whose few fragments on the collectivization of agriculture were in any case published too late to have influenced the emergence of the school. In actual fact, this trend was initially a by-product of the discussions which accompanied Khrushchev's agricultural reforms of the late 1950s and early 60s. Of course, it went much further than Khrushchev or anyone else originally intended; but this reflects partly the greater autonomy writers had won for themselves by the 1960s, and partly the conclusion in party cultural policy, including the emergence of a Russian nationalist wing. But even this is not the whole explanation of the career of

Since none of them have left honest accounts of their creative processes, Professor Clark tackles the question through the texts themselves, the major Stalinist novels. She approaches them not as one normally would modern Western literature, but more in the spirit of one examining folklore. That is to say, she regards them as artefacts of a collective tradition, created according to regulated and generally accepted patterns, like the icons from a medieval monastery. The canonical books of this tradition were established at meetings of Writers' Union congresses and in the articles of officially approved critics. Aspiring writers who wanted to get their works published knew they had to study, learn from and imitate these exemplars. The result, at least during Stalin's lifetime, was a fictional structure so stereotyped that Clark is able to reduce it to a single master plot, based on Gladkov's *Cement*. All the major Stalinist novels (with the possible exception of Sholokhov's *The Quiet Don*) can be understood in their relationship to this matrix, and in their minor deviations from it.

Where did the common spirit underlying the stereotype come from? Most people would answer uneasily: from party ideology. Clark shows that it is not as simple as that. Certainly, some of the stereotype's features were suggested in general terms by Marxism-Leninism: the framework for constructing a more humane and progressive society, and the conflict between "spontaneity" and "consciousness" which Clark shows to be crucial to the heroes' spiritual development. But Marxism-Leninism had little to say about moral principles, about subjective commitment, faith, love and hope, and all the other personal issues which are the stuff of literature, in the Soviet Union as elsewhere. To deal convincingly with these issues, Soviet literature has had to look to other traditions, to folklore, to religious practices and concepts, and to the aspirations of a native revolutionary heritage which was Populist as much as it was Marxist.

The school which actually came closest to establishing a purely Marxist-Leninist literary tradition was RAPP, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (there was scarcely a proletarian among them), which established its hegemony in the late 1920s, with party support. RAPP favoured a naturalistic, documentary type of fiction, close to reportage, focusing on the "everyday reality of socialist construction", and on the ordinary citizen, the little man making his modest but vital contribution to the great cause. RAPP members liked to think of their methods as "scientific", in the sense of revealing the reality behind appearances, "tearing off masks" in the caustic, rational and unrelenting manner of Tolstoy.

The result was, however, rather bloodless, not really the stuff to in-

April Books

Non-Fiction

THE ART OF MEMORY Friends in Perspective Lord Butler KG, CH

The final book from this eminent politician which looks at the careers of nine of his friends: Ernest Bevin, Aneurin Bevan, Lord Halifax, 'Chips' Channon, Jawaharlal Nehru, Charles Sorley, Walter Monckton, Ian Macleod and Archbishop William Temple. £7.95

Fiction

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Hodder & Stoughton

مكتبة الأصل

All for loss

By Anne Duchêne

PENELOPE FITZGERALD:
At Freddie's
182pp. Collins. £6.50.
0 00 222064 4

Taking a lovable old eccentric as the protagonist of a story must always threaten to make its centre soft. Take as protagonist a lovable old eccentric who is also the female head of a run-down but still bravely flamboyant juvenile dramatic school would seem to compound the risk, by embracing all the dead or deadening ends of theatrical narcissism — which threaten to make the edges of the story a bit soggy too. Penelope Fitzgerald has taken on both challenges in her new novel, and generously failed to overcome them.

Her central figure, Freddie, once worked with Lillian Bayliss, from whom she learned "the craft of idealism, that is to say, how to defeat materialism by getting people to work for almost nothing", and such habits as waiting on a Word for guidance. Freddie, by the 1960s, Freddie had "fulfilled the one sure condition of being loved by the English nation, that is, she had been going a long time"; but the going is increasingly hard, and the story covers the months in 1963 when Freddie, who has never set her sights for her pupils lower than Shakespeare, *Peter Pan* and pantomime, has to acknowledge television commercials.

In itself, this might have made a caustically funny little story; but the author's own generosity disperses it. Much of the interest devolves upon the new teachers among Freddie's staff, and a few of their pupils. The teachers are Irish: Hannah, aged twenty, at large in London with nothing but her goodness of heart to guide her; and wholly in thrall to the lure of "everything theatrical, which can persist in the most hard-headed, opening the way to poetry and disaster"; and Pierce ("from Castleknock, a short way out of Derry"), older and more sedately — indeed, almost sedately — serene, in whom Freddie sees "the welcome signs of someone who was never likely to earn much money, or even expect to". Pierce can "only be himself, and that not very successfully". Cue, here, for a little love-interest, admirably chafed and poignantly doomed.

Their pupils, meanwhile, the children ("these unruly children of artifice, and real and contrived emotion"), represent a concatenation of immature egotism: "all they wanted was to be noticed, and to be seen not to care whether they were

noticed or not". One of the two singled out is genuinely gifted; the other, a Dickensian knowing little boy, is only "a success". Sadly, the reader may often find difficulty, and a certain amount of tedium, in remembering which is which; until the end, when one takes part in a production of *King John* and the other is still rehearsing it.

About *King John*, the author is justly funny:

Directors realise that audiences are not likely to have much grip on Shakespeare's *King John*. They hardly know what to expect, except perhaps something about Magna Carta, which doesn't figure in the play at all. Perhaps Shakespeare had never heard of it. . . . In the high Victorian theatre the actor playing the king used to sweep the crown from his head during his death scene and even hurl it into the wings, partly to indicate magnificent failure, and partly to keep some attention to himself. By that time the audience had already seen little Arthur die and his mother Constance run mad, their handkerchiefs were soaked, they had no more tears to shed. King John himself was left ranting on, against unfair competition.

About the whole matter of theatrical illusion, though, Fitzgerald is always exuberantly exact. Freddie, for instance,

believed that the theatre should never be exposed to the air, or taken outdoors, or brought to the people. The theatre was there for audiences to come to. . . . They were creators in their own right, each performance coming to life, if it ever did, between the actors and the audience, and after that lost for eternity. The extravagance of that loss was its charm.

It is a pity to hit this nerve, and then to waste it; but somehow the obligations of fleshing out a novel seem here to have run counter to the author's will to celebrate an idea. Instead of concentrating, she has dissipated; even her commas sometimes proclaim her reliance on the three-somey weakening *faux-naïf*. One does not want to see a writer of such ease and exuberance retreat into a cosy, confidential musingness of her writing here. Penelope Fitzgerald began to write, or anyway to be published, fairly late in life. All the more reason for her to centre down, hard, on what she is able to say, rather than to waste time in trying to make herself agreeable to us.

The Girl by Meridel Le Sueur (150pp. The Women's Press. 70453 3880 7, £2.50.) has recently been published. Set in the 1930s, the novel is, as the author writes in a brief afterword, a "memorial to the great and heroic women of the depression".

Through the icy wastes

By Linda Taylor

DORIS LESSING:
The Making of The Representative for Planet 8
144pp. Cape. £6.50.
0 224 02008 0

One year after *The Sirian Experiments*, here is the fourth volume of Doris Lessing's *Canopus in Argos: Archives*. Back in 1979, *Shikasta* told Earth's story from the perspective of the gods or the benign computers or the absolute matter or whatever it is that the narrator, Johor of Canopus, represents. Representation in the *Archives* is crucial; outer space is a dimension from which to view the world. In this respect Lessing is a Martin. Her space fiction allows her the freedom to get beyond the local political or feminist or humanitarian. It was a similar kind of perspective that Swift was pursuing in *Gulliver's Travels*, through his fascination with microscopy.

On Planet 8 life is harmonious and equitable. Canopus, its friendly galactic overlord, mysteriously instructs the inhabitants to build a wall around their planet. When the snows come, they understand why: the wall will protect them from the madding ice beyond it. Meanwhile, Johor promises that all the inhabitants will be air-lifted off to live on the perfect planet, Rohanda (Earth before the axis shifted). Unfortunately, Rohanda's axis does shift, the Canopean efforts there are lost in disharmony, the planet is renamed Shikasta, "the broken one, the afflicted", and the Planet Eighters have to stay where they are to face death from the encroaching ice.

The key to *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* is mutability:

Nowhere, said Canopus, was permanence . . . not anywhere in the galaxy, or the universe. There was nothing that did not move and change. When we looked at a stone, we must think of it as a dance and a flow. And at a hillside. Or a mountain.

And, as it turns out, at ourselves. Lessing is obsessed with parts and wholes and, even more, with the holes between the parts — existence is an accumulation of nothing. Lessing is into spaces, the inner and the outer ones, and the most compelling parts of the book are the journeys the Representative takes through the oppressive icy wastes: "It was like a journey into another part of ourselves, so slowed and difficult were our movements, so painful the breaths we had to take."

Throughout the *Archives* quartet, Canopus teaches the inexplicable lessons of "Necessity". Necessity lies in pattern, order and structure; in the

parts that contribute to something larger, the greater good:

a universe that is all gradations of matter, from gross to fine to finer . . . where particles or movements so small we cannot observe them are held in a strict and accurate web, that is nevertheless nonexistent to the eyes we use for ordinary living.

The answer is to keep moving and to keep seeing; the danger (as it was for Scott's Antarctic party, in which, at least partly, this book has its origins) is to sleep.

The important thing in this story of disappointment and annihilation is not individual suffering but the collective consciousness that is bred in the Representatives. These are Doeg, the memory man, also the narrator; Pedug, the teacher; Alsi, the animal breeder; Masson, the builder; Zidany, the shelterer; Kiln, the fruit maker; Rivalin, the guardian of the lake; Bratch, the physician, and Mart, the keeper of records. Names are collective labels and are, of course, interchangeable. As the ice destroys, the need for names disappears. The Representatives leave their bundles of bones on an icy mountainside and mingle in spirit with Johor to form a conglomerate — "the Representative for Planet 8".

And as we swept on there . . . we felt beside us, and in us and with us, the frozen and dead populations that lay buried under the snows . . . But what these had been, our peoples, our selves — were with us then, were us, had become us.

This Sufist regeneration is comforting and believable as far as Planet 8 and Canopus go. But this is where the

"space perspective" is found wanting. Though Doeg does, mercifully, speak our language, he is not one of us and it's difficult for the reader, steeped in a less rarified humanity, to identify with this mystical collectivism. The trouble with the Martian imagination is that it's peopled by Space Age Houyhnhnms. While Swift knew his rational beings were essentially absurd, Lessing, like Gulliver, takes them too seriously. At the end of *Gulliver's Travels*, Culliver says, "I had compelled myself to tolerate the sight of Yahoos . . . yet my memory and imaginations were perpetually filled with the virtues and ideas of those exalted Houyhnhnms." After four books in Space, Lessing may be in danger of exalting the Canopeans in the same way: she's been spending too much time in the galactic states.

As the names of the "characters" of Planet 8 float away, we are left with the Afterword. For after all the dazzle, all the deaths and disembodiments, all the relinquishing of names and submergence of individuals into wholes, Lessing brings us down from the snowy wastes with a jolt. She explains her preoccupation with polar exploration, the origin not just of this book, but also of its predecessor. Lessing's signs and symbols may have metaphysical yearnings but they are grounded in a solid sense of the real. She is a stern but kindly teacher, and in her attempt to explain the nature of being in this book, she has sufficient certainty to convince the aspiring Representative, while the Yahoos among us can crawl into our snow houses under a pile of animal skins to sleep the sleep of death with the lesser inhabitants of Planet 8.

grapefruit, grey fish and watery spinach — and about the lawyer's sexy secretary ("From time to time Patrick allowed his fantasy free rein with her, usually after an extended lunch"). There are moments of deadpan humour, but not very effective ones.

Batchelor is a novelist of talent, but *Children in the Dark* is also, curiously, badly written — as if he were deliberately bending his language out of shape: "For some time the ungainly automobile had gybed from verge to verge of the strait limked road." And the dialogue:

"My pen has become the lance of Longus. It no longer works, it is broken." "Pseudo-Christian Arthurian bosh. You are merely slothful. More curvy?"

It's easy to mock from the terraces, but when weird things happen to the language of an intelligent, well-educated man one wants to know why, especially when the novelist seems to be in the same kind of trance as his characters. Indeed, *Children in the Dark* is in a way more interesting for what it tells one about David Batchelor than for what it tells one about its people. He seems to be a man caught between the conflicting claims of truth and elegance, and to have reached the critical moment when you realize that elegance is merciless: "The voice was sickly icy. Mrs Asperid thought of razor blades hidden in butter."

Children in the Dark explores its own trap with scrupulous, cold-blooded fairness: the claims of life, love, work and art are totted up, weighed one against the other, and negotiated to their desperate conclusion. It seems that technique is the cause of the trouble — then that seems a sick conclusion, and Batchelor appears to be fighting manfully against the odds. The book's capacity to communicate pain is real, and it achieves an authentic if ghostly X-ray of evil. But a reader of it will need plenty of extended lunches.

It is a short novel which takes a long time to read, and reading it is like being strapped to a bed of nails, and periodically injected with formic acid. Each character lives — if that's the word — in a psychotic trance. Everything seems to happen underwater, slowly and effortfully. Things are limerized with shell-shocked awkwardness. There is much lugubrious angst about the bowels, about horrible food — beer and water, fishy

A foot in the stockyard and an eye on the stars

By Gabriel Josipovici

SAUL BELLOW:
The Dean's December
312pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.
0 436 03952 4

Since *Herzog* Saul Bellow has been developing his own quite unique kind of novel. Like Virginia Woolf (though he wouldn't thank me for the comparison) he has gradually discovered a form of fiction in which plot counts for extremely little, but which is open enough to include almost everything. Of course Bellow's minimal plots are very different from Virginia Woolf's: instead of house-parties and village fêtes there are divorces, court cases, deaths. The setting is urban — usually Chicago, which is seen as the archetypal modern city — and the cast includes hoodlums, media men, academics and politicians. The "almost everything" also differs from Virginia Woolf's, for it includes all the horrors of slums and big cities, the rapes and muggings and killings, the greed for fame and money, and the monstrosities that go on over the whole world. Bellow wants to get Bokassa and his jewels as well as Idi Amin, Guatemala as well as Czechoslovakia, Vietnam as well as Auschwitz into his books. These must be nothing less than a long hard look at

the whole of our civilization as it now stands, or totters.

Some might admire the ambition, others, more cannily, recognise its dangers. For who is Saul Bellow to tell us how we live and how we should live? Why should we listen to him rather than to anyone else? Bellow's speeches in *propria persona* are often no more than the public airing of prejudice; a book such as *To Jerusalem and Back* leaves us predominantly with a sense of the author's bigotry and arrogance. But in fiction all that is changed. Bellow, half-aware of the problem, never gives the impression in his novels that what is being said about the state of the world is being said by himself or is to be taken as the final truth on the matter. Just as important are who is saying it and why, and what pressures the character is under at the time. As with Wittgenstein we cease to listen to what is being said and instead watch the speaker's gestures. For those rantings tell us more about the character than about the objective situation. Indeed, one of Bellow's points, forcibly brought out in *The Dean's December*, is that there is no "objective situation", that the journalists — even super-journalists — and the scientists — even marvellously humane and concerned scientists — do not and cannot give it to us "how it is", for "it is" only how we grasp it. And this does not mean that understanding remains irremediably subjective, but that in order really to understand

what is going on we must ourselves make an imaginative effort. Understanding will never simply reveal itself, it is never simply information which we can add to our existing stock; it comes only at a cost, as the result of a painful shedding of defenses.

In *The Dean's December* the only things that happen are that the Dean's mother-in-law dies and a black murderer is convicted. But it is a far richer book than the sprawling and overlong *Humboldt's Gift*, which actually suffered from having too much plot. Here Albert Corde, journalist and Dean of a Chicago college, accompanies his Rumanian-born wife to her country of origin to attend her mother's death. Most of the novel takes place in Bucharest in dreary mid-winter. Back home the Dean has written articles blasting Chicago for *Harper's* and now has undertaken to fight for the conviction of two black people who killed one of the students. Obviously the Dean is not popular, either with his Provost or with the radical students, who include his nephew, a friend of the defendant. In Bucharest, with nothing to do but try to comfort his wife by his presence, Corde has time to ponder his life and times, helped in this by the arrival of a school friend and rival, now an eminent journalist, friend and confidant of the great.

Those who know Bellow will know what to expect. I don't feel that the novel breaks any new ground, except

in one respect, which I will come to in a moment. But the ground can't be gone over too often. Bellow manages to make long intellectual speeches, even internal speeches, deeply dramatic; he has an instinct for the ways in which a grey day, the bare furnishings of a room, will colour our thinking, and for the complex interconnections between daily routine and our deepest thoughts and urgencies. Auden made poetry capable of bearing intelligence again, and Bellow has done the same for the novel. Yet this time I was not entirely convinced. What were once insights, discoveries, are now in danger of turning into mere tricks of style. But the problem lies deeper than that.

Bellow's heroes are all-too-aware of the temptations of imagining that horror and filth are more real than beauty and humanity. They know the romantic pull of the Chicago stockyards and their human equivalent. But Bellow himself appears to have grown curiously ambivalent. In *Humboldt's Gift* he seemed to be trying to force us to admire his immersion in the real — here, he was saying, was a man who hobbled with gangsters, who really knew what was what, not an effete ivory tower artist. But in *The Dean's December* he seems to be saying: Miss La Trobe? Part of Bellow wants to say, no, of course not, death and loss and the sufferings of the heart are the same everywhere, there are no masses, only millions of individual human beings. But part of him also wants to say: America is where it is really happening, and Chicago is where America is happening, and here am I right in the centre of it and not flinching.

Contradictions don't matter if they are faced and recognised — indeed, the power of Bellow's novels up to *Herzog* was precisely this: his sense that only fiction could hold such contradictions together. But now there is a lack of control, a rift right at the heart of the work. In *The Dean's December*, though, this is almost

Privacy and provocation

By Martin Swales

HEINRICH BÖLL:
The Safety Net
Translated from the German by Lella Vennewitz
314pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.50.
0 436 05454 X
Essays/ische Schriften und Reden 2
1964-1972
640pp. Cologne: Kiepenheuer and Witsch.
3 462 01342 4

Heinrich Böll's latest novel is set in West Germany in the 1970s. As the original title (*Fürsorgliche Belagerung*) implies, this is a society which is "solitarily beleaguered" by security services. At the centre of the novel stands Fritz Tolm, a wealthy newspaper proprietor, who has just been elected head of a large business conglomerate. Now more than ever he and his wife Käthe find that they are obliged to live their lives under constant surveillance. Both of them accept this as a fact of life, yet repeatedly they resent the intrusions into, not just their privacy, but their very humanity (the two words as so often in Böll, largely synonymous).

Holzpuke, the head of the security services, is particularly anxious because Tolm's two sons, Rolf and Herbert, are suspected of being, if not terrorists, at least sympathisers and fellow-travellers. Sabine Tolm, his sister, is not under any such suspicion, but her marriage to Erwin Fischer, another business tycoon, is threatened. She is pregnant by a husband, a security guard, and in the course of the novel she walks out on her husband and goes to live with Rolf. Fritz and Käthe have never repudiated their children; indeed, they constantly try to lead a normal family life amid the mounting pressures. Matters come to a head when Beverlohn, the lover of Rolf's former mistress Veronica Ziegler, is killed. The security services fear that Fritz Tolm will be the object of a terrorist attack. But Veronica, who crosses the German border with a booby-trapped bicycle, confesses to the authorities. The immediate threat is lifted. The novel ends with Käthe Tolm commenting on the various crises and disturbances with the words "I could think of worse news", and her husband, concluding "that some form of socialism must come, must prevail". The events of the

days in which the Tolm family escape disaster by the skin of their teeth. But the happy ending solves nothing: the siege will continue.

Both thematically and formally, Böll's novel — like everything else he has written — is concerned to cherish the beleaguered humanity of the lives put before us. Each of the major characters provides in turn the narrative focus of the novel, and we share their perception of themselves and the world around them. Böll eavesdrops on the consciousness of Fritz Tolm, Sabine, Hubert and Helga Hendler, Rolf, Holzpuke, Erna Breuer (a neighbour of Sabine's), Bleibl (an industrialist), and Veronica. It is central to Böll's purpose that we enter the minds not just of the "good" characters but also of those who are manifestly not on the side of the angels. Even in such figures as Holzpuke and Bleibl, Böll suggests a vulnerability and compassion that are at variance with their public persona. The quality of humanity, it seems, is not schematically distributed. No doubt there are villains (Erwin Fischer, the enterprising director of the "Bienenkorb" chain stores, would be one obvious candidate); but they are not allowed a voice in the novel.

Time and time again the characters register the outrage done to their humanity by the society in which they live — an outrage that threatens to distort their social, familial, and sexual relationships. Fritz Tolm's memories of meeting Käthe during the war, Sabine's recollection of her clandestine love-making with Hubert, Helga Hendler's anguish at the coldness of her husband: it is against such moments that the social deformations are judged. Security surveillance is linked metaphorically with the pornography which is omnipresent in the society: common to both is a kind of voyeurism.

The Safety Net is part of that reckoning with the Federal Republic which has always been an important aspect of Böll's work (his career as a writer is as old as that Republic; the early works appearing just after the war). In his essays and in his fiction he has sought to defend human values against the political and social pressures which threaten them. There is a moral and aesthetic integrity to his work, yet this integrity is also part of the problem he poses. On many occasions he has come perilously — and deliberately — close to sentimentality. He is unabashedly

sceptical about good taste and fine writing: for him such things are symptomatic of the ideological strait-jacket which constricts human spontaneity. Even kitsch, it would seem, is preferable to high culture. At times there is a deliberate laxity to his writing, an abundant and polemical fondness for "little things", for food and drink, for pleasurable bodily functions. This aggressive modesty of style and theme, as the essays make clear, is inseparable from Böll's scepticism about German culture, a culture that has ventured only rarely and reluctantly into a low-mimetic love affair with humble lives and circumstances. The provocativeness of Böll's art is designed to unsettle German literary criteria. If much of *The Safety Net* seems digressive, self-indulgent, stylistically flabby, the novel also asks whether such criticisms are not part of precisely that ideology which it seeks to counteract.

The issue is important and, while it may be raised most urgently by the German tradition, it is by no means confined to it. If the writer wishes to articulate humanity, in answer to those forces that deform it, where is he to locate the undeformed consciousness or language that is proof against social conditioning and its systematic distortions? In twentieth-century German literature Brecht, supremely, managed to find an answer that is compassionate yet un-sentimental, tender yet resilient. In part this has to do with his ability to create a simple yet stylized speech; in part it is grounded in a (theatrical) showing rather than telling. Heinrich Böll may not be in this league: few writers — whether in Germany or elsewhere — are. But his latest novel, in Lella Vennewitz's racy, slangy rendering, is part and parcel of the inelegant provocation of his work.

Entries are now invited for the 1982 David Higham Prize of £500 which is awarded to the best first novel or book of short stories published during the current year, written in English by a citizen of the British Commonwealth, "Bire or South Africa", and for the 1982 John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize, also worth £500, which this year will be awarded to the most promising literary work published during the current year and written by an author under thirty. Further details are available from the National Book League, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2OZ, to which address entries for both awards should be sent by July 1, 1982.

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Cultures and characters

By Alan Bell

STANLEY MORISON:

Selected Essays on the History of Letter-Forms in Manuscript and Print Edited by David McKitterick

2 volumes. 417pp. 126 plates. Cambridge University Press. £120. 0 521 22338 5

Stanley Morison's posthumous standing has been confirmed by Nicolas Barker's distinguished biography, several monographs on his work, an important retrospective exhibition and the definitive revision of the bibliography of his writings. His standing in typographical history, both as a scholar and as a practitioner, has been fully confirmed by subsequent commentators, but some of the foundations on which his reputation is based have remained notoriously elusive. Several of his most important typographical and calligraphical studies are buried in obscure Festschriften or periodicals now of great price, and are far from accessible. Other essays were deliberately conceived of as working papers gradually refining ideas that exercised his mind throughout an intellectually strenuous life; though the preposition "Towards" only occurs in the titles of a few of his essays gathered here, they nearly all show a striving in the direction of definition or perfection that was characteristic of so much of his work. The notions that were working their way out in his Lyell Lectures, entitled "Aspects of Authority and Freedom in relation to Graeco-Latin script, inscription and type, sixth century BC to twentieth century AD", had long been exercising him. In the decade between the delivery of the lectures and his death in 1967 he continued to work at the topic, his posthumously published *Politics and Script* having a tentative air to it in spite of all its stimulating dogmatism. Similar questions of why particular letter-forms were adopted by particular authorities, intellectual, religious or political, also lay behind the volume *John Foll: the University Press and the "Fell" Types*, published the day after his death, which is one of his greatest memorials.

This vigorous search for explanations of the interplay between grand schemes of cultural history and the intricate details of palaeographical and typographical presentation was bound to throw off innumerable parerga as the author's intellectual horizons extended themselves, enriched by the meticulous and professionally essential analysis of minute distinctions of literal form. Even though subsequent scholarship has often modified the conclusions of his pioneering essays, they are so full and suggestive, to be worth continued study. Morison himself was well aware of the need to make his occasional publications more accessible, but his main attempt to gather scattered material was a victim of an air raid in 1941: when his working notes and much of his personal library were destroyed. At long last a collection on the lines he intended has been published, in a form as ample and elegant as he himself would have considered appropriate. (Even he might have had difficulty in matching the often vast footnotes to the double-column layout that is otherwise sensitively handled by the Cambridge University Press at its best.) The illustrations in this edition are in many cases an improvement on those originally published, there are excellent indexes, and the volumes are succinctly introduced by David McKitterick, who has already shown his mastery of the subject in his edition of Morison's correspondence with his American colleague Daniel Berkeley Updike.

Nowhere is the editor's hand better shown than in the additional footnotes discreetly added to the palaeographical essays, indicating the many corrections both of detail and in principle made from the work of scholars like Professor B. L. Ullman, and Dr A. C. de la Mare. These essays on early and Renaissance hands retain their interest, and not just for their place in the history

graphy of a subject which, as Morison himself was well aware, was partly uncharted and terminologically unsettled at the time he wrote. Some of his exploratory remarks on post-Renaissance calligraphy remain the best (and often the only) comments on that still underexplored subject: the study of English, and Scottish, writing-masters and their books has not yet advanced much beyond Sir Ambrose Heal's catalogue with Morison's introduction (reprinted here), published half a century ago. Morison brought to the study of handwriting an eye trained differently from the usual palaeographical scholar's: he took a typographer's view of the forms of individual letters and their relation to each other, and his attitude to the duct (or flow) of a particular script, and of scribal *mise-en-page*, may have been influenced by his work on early printed books.

The major essays on the design of types, published in the 1920s, have a quite remarkable range. "Towards an Ideal Italic", from the *Fleurbaey* of 1926, is in many ways the most interesting of the set. It is more forcefully argued than its companions on Roman and script types, and full of stimulating general comments alongside the detailed commentary on ligatures and swashes, and so on. Its force is not very seriously diminished

by the knowledge that his arguments in favour of a sloped Roman type are against Italic forms properly devised have been largely disproved by later preference and practice. In this Italic essay, as elsewhere, there are the characteristic dicta of the wise practitioner.

In typography, as in most arts and crafts, success attends the disciplined and restrained use of appropriate material. The most appropriate material is that informed to the greatest extent by right reason and intelligence; only when the traditional typographical usages are in conformity, are we justified in being satisfied with them.

Historical research and professional practice were interdependent; knowledge of the past was for Morison the soundest grounding for current experiment. His mind was constantly in search of Origins, whether of shapes or of ideas. The past was used most effectively as a springboard for the revision of current practice in his celebrated "Memorandum on a proposal to revise the typography of *The Times*" of 1930, where he treated the Editor and Proprietor to a prolonged discourse on the history of the Roman letter and of the structure of printing type. The presentation lost nothing of its pungency while the whole of printing

and the mind of man were deployed in a leisurely but commercially skilful attempt to convince his clients of the need to adopt a new typography that would be "masculine, English, direct, simple, not more novel than it be, lowly to be novel, or more novel than logic is novel in newspaper typography, and absolutely free from faddishness and frivolity". The case was put patiently, and convincingly, and by the time Morison turned the attention of the *eminentissimi* of Printing House Square to a cow even more sacred – the black-letter masthead of *The Times* itself – he felt he had earned the right to use a little cheek. Of the Gothic style used in the paper from early days (but not at the very start), he could remark that "Fashionable gentlemen of the last quarter of the [eighteenth] century, anxious to strengthen their social positions, redecorated their country houses with this busy fusion and confusion of gothic sadness and with rococo gaiety... The most significant memorial of this lapse in English taste is the present gothic titling of *The Times*". The light-hearted manner of Morison's supplementary memorandum urging a consistent typographic approach for all parts of the paper helped to give its proprietors courage to tackle the most emotionally sensitive part of their task of reform.

The *Times* memoranda, well known from all accounts of Morison's work, were internally circulated documents, now very difficult for the outsider to locate. They occupy the most prominent part of the second volume of McKitterick's selection, which also includes a long paper, "The Origins of the Newspaper", revised periodically between 1932 and 1954, and a substantial essay, "The Learned Press as an Institution", from a Festschrift published in Amsterdam in 1963. In the latter, Morison's thoughts can be seen turning to Aspects of Authority, foreshadowing some of the later parts of *Politics and Script*. Authority keeps breaking in throughout both volumes, whether in the discussion of the script adopted by Abbot Maudramm of Corbie in the late eighth century, or of the political and religious considerations that may have affected the use of Arabesque ornament in early sixteenth-century Florence. Issues much wider than the conventional limits of historical typographical analysis are constantly touched on, and they show strongly individual qualities of mind being added to the quite outstanding qualities of eye that were the principal attributes that Morison brought to his typographical work, and they never fail to animate even the most recalcitrant of technical disquisitions.

Designed to delight

By Ruari McLean

JOHN DREYFUS:

A History of the Nonesuch Press With a Descriptive Catalogue by David McKitterick, Simon Rendall and John Dreyfus

340pp. Nonesuch Press. £115. 0 370 30397 0

Many people still think of the Nonesuch as being a private press; John Dreyfus, in this admirable history, shows clearly that it was a genuine, if highly unusual and innovative, publishing house, producing unlimited as well as limited editions.

Francis Meynell founded the Press in 1923, with, as partners, his second wife Vera Mendel, whom he had just married, and David Garnett, who had been best man at the wedding. Vera Mendel provided the firm's working capital of £300, as well as formidable literary talents: she chose and edited the first Nonesuch book, John Donne's *Love Poems*, published in an edition of 1,250 copies (1,200 at 10s 6d). The eighth Nonesuch title (of no fewer than twelve published between May and December 1923), Ernst Toller's play *Maske und Man*, was also her choice and translated by her from the German – the first translation ever made of Toller's work into English. Vera Mendel knew even more poetry than Francis, and as he himself has recorded, developed in him a sense of responsibility about texts – which became such a feature of the Nonesuch Press. David Garnett, the third partner, was yet more widely read than Francis or Vera, and was at that time a partner in Francis Birkbeck's antiquarian bookshop at 30 Gerrard Street in Soho. Garnett, says Dreyfus, remembered his bookshop partners as great talkers, who attracted more visitors and listeners, so that the shop was "often as full as a pub at closing time". The basement was empty, and Meynell took it as the first office of the new firm. Garnett's contributions were not only literary: he introduced Stephen Gooden, the engraver of the first Nonesuch device.

It is worth noticing that Stanley Morison was not invited to join the venture, although he and Meynell had been working together for some years and were close friends. Dreyfus writes: "Somewhat sadly Francis felt that the 'approach' of Morison in 1923... Their friendship had suffered from Francis' leaving his church and moreover each was uncomfortable knowing about the other's matrimonial problems." (It was Francis

Meynell's mother who had written the classic sonnet of renunciation "I must not think of thee"; but it was Morison who, in love with someone not his wife, chose the bitter path of renunciation. Francis did not.)

The proof of Nonesuch's competence as general publishers was *The Week-End Book*, published at 6s in 1924, and reprinted six times in the same year. The first edition had a jacket by McKitterick Kauffert; later editions were illustrated by Albert Rutherford (in colour), T. L. Poulton and Edward Bawdon. In deed he is quoted as telling Max Reinhardt "how pleased he was that the pre-war reputation of the Nonesuch Press remained untarnished – a reputation that any publisher who worked for Nonesuch lost money" and it is also clear that most of those he exploited came back for more. They were (wisely) proud to be associated with Meynell's achievements. Dreyfus shows again and again that Meynell never consciously accepted second-best solutions to anything. He took endless trouble – and gave endless trouble to others – to get the result he had in mind, which is why, long after profits and losses are forgotten, Nonesuch books remain valuable.

In the section devoted to Nonesuch publicity (itself remarkable, and only slightly less expensive to collect than the books) Dreyfus writes: "No other publisher had publicity devised by a man who combined as did Francis the abilities of poet, publicist, typographer and publisher. He was unique in this particular combination of talents and experience."

The complicated (but interesting) story of what happened to Nonesuch when it ceased, during the Depression, to be able to provide Meynell with a living, and how it eventually came back to him as a gift from the American publisher George Macy, is well told. When Macy "rescued" him from financial disaster, he wanted Meynell to stay on the new Nonesuch, but he felt bound to refuse since the strategy as well as the money was to be all Macy's. He did however agree to remain as designer of all the books. It was under Macy's regime that the great Nonesuch Dickens appeared; it was designed largely by the late Harry Carter, under Meynell's supervision. A few books appeared with the Nonesuch imprint that Meynell had nothing to do with, and there were a few more for which he designed only the binding and modified the title-page: all this is detailed in the catalogue.

The Nonesuch Press was never again a full-time job for Meynell. When it was re-formed after the war, Max Reinhardt became Meynell's

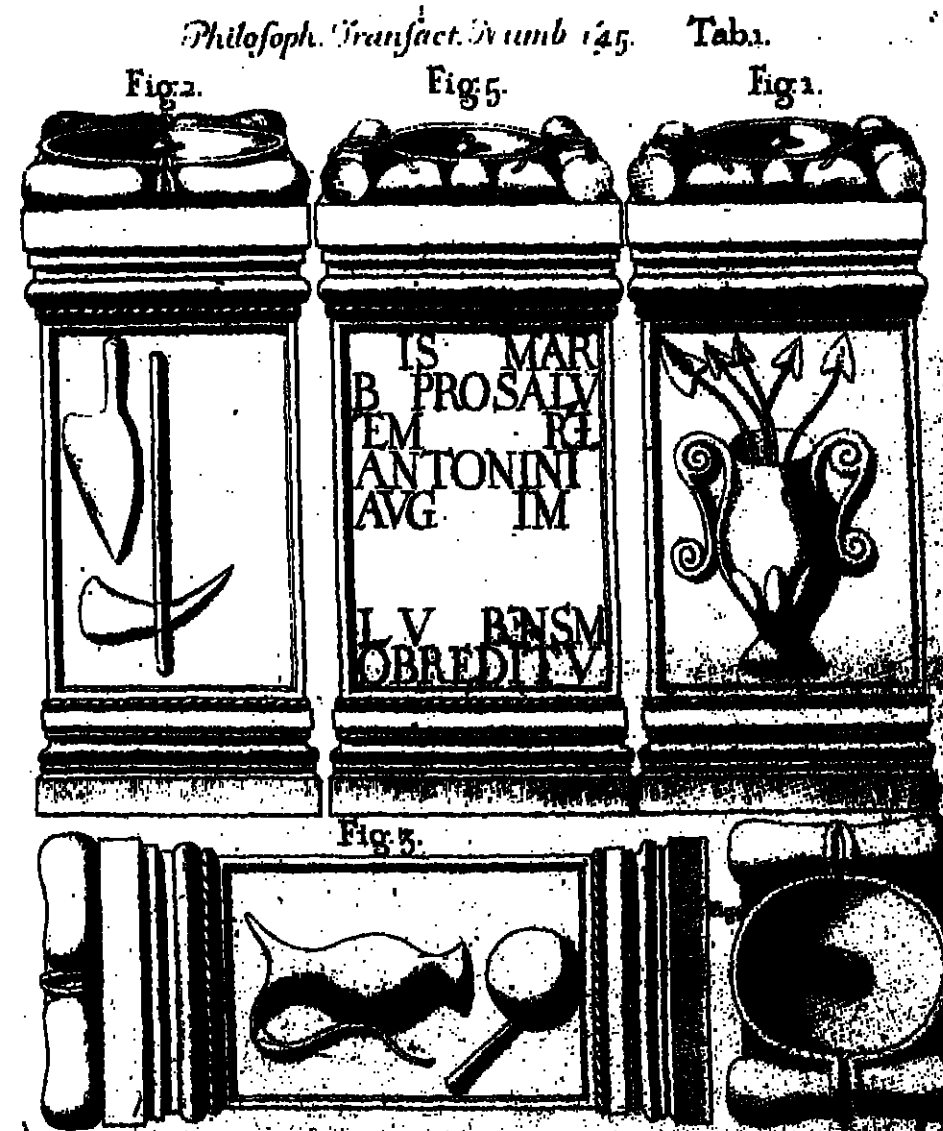
partner, and his publishing firm, the Bodley Head, undertook responsibility for the financing and production of the books, which Meynell devised and designed. The Nonesuch Press, before the war, had published several children's books, including the now almost mythical *Tale of Mr Tooleloo* and *Tooleloo Two* by Bernard and Elinor Darwin. Now, a series of children's books called the Nonesuch Cygnets was produced, planned by Meynell as "beginning perhaps in the nursery and still surviving to its owner's old age; in short, the beginnings of a library and even of collector's habits". While he was designing the Cygnets he was also working on the second Nonesuch Bible; Dreyfus notes, "Francis felt that the gaiety of planning the Cygnets had helped him with the Bible; and equally that the detailing and discipline of the Bible pages had helped him with the Cygnets." The second Nonesuch Bible was published in three volumes in 1963: 10,000 sets were issued at £12 12s and £45; no better edition is available in which to enjoy reading the Authorized Version.

Dreyfus sums up with excellent, well-illustrated appreciations of the Nonesuch Press's design, production and publishing achievements; this is followed by a catalogue, David McKitterick, Simon Rendall and John Dreyfus, which contains more useful information than any other press bibliography I have ever read, down to references to reviews of the books at the time of publication. If it could have included a reproduction of every title-page, instead of some (as has occasionally been done, for example in some Harvard University Press catalogues), it would have been perfect.

The design of the book, by Dreyfus, and the printing by Curwen, are good, but the jacket is superb. The spines of twenty-four Nonesuch books have been photographed through a special camera, procured by Cambridge University Press, and a new process of *main* lamination gives the colour photograph a sensuous, velvety quality that would, we can be sure, have delighted Francis Meynell.

The March 1982 issue of *The Library* (Oxford University Press for the Bibliographical Society, ISSN 0024-2160) contains a long article by T. H. Howard-Hill on the MS copy for *King Lear*. Other contributions range from a missing fragment of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* to a series of addenda to the standard W. H. Auden bibliography.

G. N.



The York zoologist Martin Lister's drawing of a Roman altar "in all its sides, and... the plan of the top also" as published on March 10, 1683, in the Royal Society's proceedings, and incorporated in Chapter Three, "Of Sepulchres", in Part Three of *Monumenta Britannica* by John Aubrey. Volume Two of the work has just been published for the first time (following Volume One in 1980), edited by John Fowles with annotations by Rodney Legg (544pp. Doves Publishing Company, Milborne Port, Sherborne, Dorset £95. 0 902129 50 3).

Visits to the marketplace

By Pat Rogers

ROBIN MYERS and MICHAEL HARRIS (Editors):

Development of the English Book Trade, 1700-1899

172pp. Oxford Polytechnic Press, Headington, Oxford, OX3 0BP. £5.50. 0 902692 26 7

Generally the old-style bibliophile and the practitioner of *l'histoire du livre* behave like Castor and Pollux: when one is in evidence, the other retreats from view. The present collection affords something of an exception. It comprises five papers delivered at a conference organized by the University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies in November 1980. *L'apparition du livre*, if one may misapprehend the phrase, arises from an initiative of the publishing course at Oxford Polytechnic, and the volume is a creditable production. A slightly amateurish look to the layout is more than made good by an accurate text and a stouter binding in limp cloth than many commercial books now possess (stitching rather than glue). The only misprint worth attention is a reference to A. N. L. Munby as "Munby".

It is the contents of the volume which may give rise to legitimate criticism. They were unbalanced by the sad death of Ian Parsons just before the conference took place; his intended survey of book-trade legislation from the Copyright Act to the Net Book Agreement would have supplied a firm spine to the intellectual and historical coverage, one that is not really present as the book stands. Three factors have helped to weight the scales so that the later part of the designated period, so far as detailed treatment is concerned, is found wanting.

First, the intended contribution by Parsons is replaced by one on government tolerance towards the press, by Alan Downie. This is a highly interesting essay, but its cut-off date is as early as 1790 (fixed, if I under-

stand correctly, by the composition of a passage in Boswell on the topic). Second, the paper by John Sutherland which does reach into the 1890s is by far the shortest item. It takes a good deal of secondary work for granted, and moves rapidly to summation and critical assessment. Third, the contribution by Peter Thorogood which ends the volume serves further to unbalance things. The title is "Thomas Hood: A Nineteenth-Century Author and his Relations with the Book Trade to 1835". In fact, the first section concerns Thomas Hood, senior, the poet's father; while the second part is a mini-biography of the earlier career of the writer himself, stopping short at his enforced exile. Stronger editing might have nudged this contribution more sustainably in the direction of issues raised elsewhere among the papers.

The book has a number of competing centres of interest. The two most significant contributions relate to the eighteenth century and take a broad social or political perspective on events in the book trade. Downie usefully points out confusions which have grown up over the Stamp Act of 1712, and shows how a quite different measure (lost in its passage through parliament) represented a truly repressive attempt to curb the trade by obliging even authors to list their name and address in each book. His account of politicians' attitudes towards the press suggests an affinity with the views of some contemporary publishers towards illicit photocopying – not that the latter's aggrieved party should get a share in the action: Michael Harris, in what is probably the most valuable single item, considers "Periodicals and the Book Trade". He reveals the extent of booksellers' participation in the running of newspapers and magazines, and draws on genuinely new information to establish his case that "the extension of periodical ownership tightened up the infra-structure of the book trade, giving a degree of formality and practical effectiveness to the booksellers which they had not previously obtained."

This paper indicates that some qualification might be made to this statement by Sutherland – that is: "In the eighteenth century the collaborative tendency took the form of *ad hoc* combinations of publishers, typically mustered for single productions. There was no general or effective cartelization within the trade until 1829, when the Committee of London Booksellers and Publishers came into being." As one would expect, Sutherland writes authoritatively and sharply on such matters as the Net Book Agreement and the Society of Authors; but the treatment is too rapid to allow for any very surprising disclosure.

There remain two contributions in a quite different vein. The way in which Robin Myers begins her account of John Nichols sufficiently reveals its mode of operation: "Mr Nichols", the Oxford printer Daniel Prince, told the antiquary Richard Gough – and Nichols recorded it in the *Literary Anecdotes* – "is one of those laborious and truly useful Gentlemen who do not spare pains to preserve and inform Posterity in Literary History". Like Myers' predecessor E. L. Hart, Miss Myers has taken over some of the more badly characterized of her subject; the result is a choppy, spasmodic argument, with quotations within quotations and some higgledy-piggledy bibliographic excursions. There is a higher proportion of unfamiliar material in Thorogood's essay, but the tendency to wander off into the doings of others (John Taylor, especially) and an inveterate diffuseness mean that this proto-thesis on Hood fails to illuminate book-trade developments as it might have done. The real interest is a nakedly biographic.

Mr Sutherland ends his piece with the most dramatic thought on offer, that is the prediction of "some new and imminent tectonic shift in the British book trade". Nothing is seismic in the forecasted in this volume, but it contains essays of real independent interest. The right expression might be *laudandus in partibus*.

PN Review

tenth anniversary

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An Interpretation of Sophocles
507pp. Harvard University Press. £21.
0 674 90206 8

Sophocles seems to generate works of criticism at the same rate as Shakespeare, no doubt for the same good reason that there is so much in him to write about. Two other full-length studies were published in 1980, while *Tragedy and Civilization* was in the press: Winthrop-Langman's *Sophocles: an Interpretation* and Burton's *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies*. Another, Albert Machin's *Continuité et cohérence dans le théâtre de Sophocle*, is already imminent. Charles Segal's long book makes a highly individual contribution to the debate, diverting attention from many of the favourite issues of traditional criticism and attempting to approach Sophocles from a fresh vantage-point. What he has to say will have an important effect on the way we think about these plays in future and will doubtless make much work that has been influential in the past look crude and oversimplified, though it is one of his great merits that he writes without polemical intent.

Other qualities that impress themselves very strongly on the reader are Segal's enthusiasm, sensitivity and sheer patience in attention to detail. His background reading is prodigious, and there are plenty of places where a less serious critic would have been tempted merely to show it off, or to indulge in scholarly controversy for its own sake; but Segal, though remarkably conscientious in his study of other people's work and generous in his acknowledgment of it, never lets it distract him from the important business in hand, which is to offer a consistent and detailed interpretation of each of the seven surviving tragedies. This means paying very close attention to language, and he has made a systematic attempt by means of transliteration, translation and paraphrase, to share his often complex readings with the non-specialist. For the reader with no Greek at all the book is bound to be slow going, but if he is willing to persevere (and is already familiar with the action of the plays) he will find it helpful and informative and in no way patronizing. The classical scholar for his part will find stimulus in the way old problems are redefined and examined in new contexts.

The book opens with three chapters which set out Segal's critical position. Sophoclean tragedy, as he sees it, is characteristically concerned with civilization. "The fruit of man's humanness in the face of the impersonal forces of nature and his own potential violence on the one hand and the remote powers of the gods on the other." In exploring the tensions and conflicts that man faces in his attempt to live by civilized values Sophocles - naturally enough for a writer in fifth-century Athens - uses the model of the *polis*, "a bounded space dividing the human world from the wild", and presents his heroes as individuals with "a special destiny apart from other men" which gives their life moral significance, and also as suffering "a potentially dangerous, indeed fatal, isolation from the community and its secure values".

The hero not only fulfils a pattern of attaining personal knowledge out of ignorance, reality out of illusion, but also enacts paradigmatically the place of man on the axis between god and beast, between divine order and the threat of chaos or meaninglessness. The two axes intersect at the points of man's uniquely human creations: the city, the house, ritual, law, justice, language. It is just these creations and the structures on which they rest that the hero calls into question, threatens, and paradoxically affirms.

Segal argues that this general approach to Sophoclean tragedy can usefully be illuminated by the

methods of structuralist criticism, not just because Greek literature operates in terms of polarities, but also, more importantly, because this kind of analysis views a literary work "in the context of the community" and the structures which pervade the entire mental life of the community, and because it attempts to "decode the system" of the community in question by revealing the homologies between the different codes of the social order - familial, spatial, linguistic, ritual and so on. This is the principle on which Segal organizes the chapters which deal with the plays one by one: using a synchronic rather than a diachronic method he examines in detail how the different codes are interconnected and how they are used in each play to give significance to the issues that the poet elicits from his chosen myth. The strength of this mode of analysis is that it never looks for a slick and over-simple formulation of "meaning" but attempts to do justice to each play's profound complexities. Some of the insights Segal offers, particularly on *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus Colonus*, show how effectively the method can be used.

On the other hand, it has its drawbacks. The characteristic pattern of Segal's chapters is cumulative; this arrangement in the form of a list, in which each of the various codes is studied in turn, offers very little scope for the development of an argument, and it is hard to read the book without being given an impression of sameness and over-rich elaboration, although the writing is consistently fluent and Segal has taken pains to avoid a mechanical manner of presentation. What is missing is a sense of the elegance, shapeliness and dynamic movement of the tragedies, and of their paradoxical lucidity that masks the deepest ambiguity. Admittedly some of Segal's imaginative responses to Sophoclean imagery give a hint of the extraordinary intellectual and aesthetic excitement that the poet arouses, but the book does not capture his architectonic qualities or the feel of his rhetoric. Despite some good passing remarks, and the dust-jacket's claim that the study pays "special attention to form, style and character", there are only a few cursory and rather vague comments on the formal aspects of the lyrics, no attempt is made to study the relation between syntax and sense (or to point, for example, to the paradox that when language collapses into inarticulate cries, like the yells of pain of *Philoctetes*, these are normally contained within the formal pattern of the language verse), and the synchronic presentation makes it difficult to trace the ways in which words become progressively weighted as a play develops (there is a good exception to this last point in the chapter on *Electra*). Of course there is a limit to what any one critic can cover. In a single book, Segal is well aware that there are many areas that he has had to neglect; but his own formal choices have seriously limited his freedom to explore those of Sophocles.

Another difficulty arises from his failure to look squarely at the use that Sophocles makes of the epic. The *polis* of fifth-century Greece is indeed the focus of Sophoclean tragedy, but the plays are set in the heroic world, and the characters speak a language which is deeply influenced by Homer, the cyclic

poets and their lyric successors. Whatever else that world of epic poetry may have meant to Sophocles and his contemporaries it certainly meant civilization. The heroic setting was more than a convenient device for giving the action glamour and putting it at a suitable distance from the humdrum present: by recalling the values and standards, the "deep structures", of the fictional society made familiar by the Homeric Greek's inheritance, they made implicit connections between that world and their own contemporary experience. Segal often writes as though the main function of Homeric echoes in Sophocles were to mark the inversion of heroic values in the tragic situation, but they surely also work more positively to convince the audience that human affairs - even their own contemporary problems - are intensely interesting and significant, the proper subject for high poetry. What most needs emphasizing is the pervasiveness of Homer in Sophocles (Frankel once remarked that one lifetime was not enough to study Sophocles' debt to Homer) - something on the scale of Lucretius' presence in Virgil or Virgil's in Milton. This reliance on earlier literature and its implicit model of civilization greatly complicates the task of "deciphering the codes".

Take "the wild", the beast world, which is one of Segal's recurrent themes as the threat to civilization "from below". He assumes that images taken from the natural world of

animals, growing things and landscape help to articulate the tension between nature and culture or savagery and civilization; but Homeric poetry had already made extensive use of such analogies to give expression to its own world view (Segal himself suggests that this was not exactly comparable with that of the fifth-century poets: "In Homeric epic the limits between human and bestial, though threatened, are relatively stable. Homer's formulaic language confers a certain built-in continuity." Thus Sophocles had access to highly elaborate, "civilized" ways of talking about these elemental things which we should take into account before interpreting any reference to the natural world as reflecting the polarity between civilized space and the wild. One might, for example, want to invoke the very rich poetic associations of the nightingale lamenting its young (who go back ultimately to the *Odyssey*) before seeing the references to this image at *Electra* 107, 243-244 as examples of the animal imagery surrounding the house and its curse which "brings the bestial into the very heart of the *oikos*").

Whatever its limitations, Segal's method does open one's eyes to many intricate and significant connections in a Sophoclean play, and he is particularly convincing in his balanced treatment of the gods, taking Greek religion and the gods' place in Sophocles seriously without imposing anachronistic moral criteria on the material, capturing "the beauty and terror", as E. R. Dodds put it, of the

traditional beliefs. One of the best passages in the book is perhaps the discussion of Heracles *ex machina* in the second chapter on *Philoctetes* (itself the most interesting of the chapters devoted to individual plays). On some points of religious interpretation Segal seems less sure-footed: it really fair to treat the Unwritten Laws in *Antigone* as the special concern of the gods below? In view of his sensible approach to the treatment of character and the self it is a little odd to find him occasionally flirting with psycho-analysis ("incessantly begotten, he consumes his life in a kind of narcissistic involution of sibling rivalry", on Polyneices).

The tone is always warm and constructive, admirably free from pedantry and contentiousness. But the writing often lacks crispness, and the book as a whole is certainly too long. Although Segal's reading is very detailed and observant he makes a surprising number of trivial and not-so-trivial slips (there are no "nervous dochmiac rhythms" in the first stasimon of *Trachiniae*, here wrongly called the second stasimon; Deianira does not compare girlhood to "an enclosed virginial meadow" at *Trach.* 144-9; *figos* at *Trach.* 171 means oak, not beech trees; Ismene, not Antigone, is the viper Creon sees lurking in his house at *Ant.* 531ff). Nevertheless the book demands to be taken very seriously, as an honest and sensitive reading in which anyone who cares about Sophocles can find much that is valuable and stimulating.

Country connections

By Jasper Griffin

CHARLES SEGAL:
Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral
Essays on Theocritus and Virgil
348pp. Guildford: Princeton
University Press. £17.40 (paperback,
£6.30).
0 691 06475 X

Theocritus has received uneven treatment from scholars in this century. The great commentary of Gow (1952), connoisseur and collector of Degas, combines exact erudition with a creative dose of the dryness which was the dark side of Housman's legacy to Cambridge. No aesthetic comment, no subjective judgment stains the white radiance of those 640 precise and patient pages. To work through such a commentary on such a text - the witty and versatile poet, sometimes exquisite, sometimes indecent, confronting the imperious polymath - is an experience which has a savour of its own to palates with a relish for incongruity. The commentary by Sir Kenneth Dover (1971) is less rigorously austere, but its trenchant common sense, vigorous conciseness, and absolute freedom from every sort of nonsense, still left a good deal unsaid. The Birkbeck College seminar is currently applying to all the Hellenistic poets an approach which makes Gow look frivolous, finding, it seems, their sole interest in the details of the relation of their language to that of Homer.

A case could still be made, discreditable to modern scholarship, for

saying that the most sympathetic book on the poet is that of Legrand, published in 1898. But about 1966 other voices began to be heard, especially in America; voices which certainly cannot be charged with aridity, or indeed with conciseness. One cannot imagine Dover saying, as Charles Segal says, "What makes Theocritus' pastoral fascinating and difficult is the total incorporation of the symbolic levels of meaning into the surface structure", or "Statically does indeed close the poem, but it is still a desiderated ideal, not a solidly attained fact", or "This combination of a dynamic and a symmetrical structure is also expressive of the two planes on which the narrative moves, the dramatic and the symbolical".

Something similar is true of Virgil's *Eclogues*. The large collection of historical facts, and speculation

which H. J. Rose published in 1942 under the title *The Eclogues of Virgil* gave answers to such dry questions of that day as "Where was Virgil's farm?" and "Exactly how did the land confiscations work?" Here too a series of recent publications has lifted the discussion on to a altogether loftier plane. Segal writes "Here the pastoral reality of streams and meadows is one with the universal and symbolic 'streams of song' from which the pastoral rivulet flows", and "Love and poetry are joined to create an order which overlaps the dualities (man-nature, sense-spirit) of our world" - sentences which would have made Rose stare and gasp. What Segal now offers is a collection of fifteen of his articles on these two subjects.

The larger half of the book is concerned with the seven pastoral poems of Theocritus. The rest of that poet's productions, with the exception of *Idyll* 2, is hardly mentioned (it is striking, too, that Segal virtually disregards the rest of extant Hellenistic poetry: the name of Callimachus hardly occurs). The omission is a damaging one. Theocritus was not a pastoral poet who happened also to write other things - Segal observes almost with surprise that he can write *Idylls* which, properly speaking, are not bucolic at all - but a sophisticated and subtle literary man who wrote in a wide range of very different forms and even of didactic. Some of his poems are mimics; some of his mimes are set in the country; some of those set in the country are pastoral. His pastoral poems present a very wide range of

level, style, and dignity. Had Segal thought of Theocritus in that way, a way which seems to me inescapable, he might not have been so eager to assume that "as the founder of pastoral poetry Theocritus stands in closer connection with its mythical elements and their doubtless ritual origin", and to treat "the pastoral genre" as a clearly separate and clearly serious one. There is virtually no real evidence for any ritual origins, and nothing that we know of Theocritus makes it probable that he would have taken such things seriously if there were.

The most rewarding of the Theocritean pieces seems to me to be that entitled "Thematic coherence in Theocritus' bucolic *Idylls*" (1977), which shows how the same subject-matter and the same motifs recur on different stylistic levels in the different poems. Harder to accept are those which plead for the existence of mythical patterns in the *Idylls*; hardest of all, perhaps, the pervasive desire, here as in so much contemporary scholarship, that all the poems shall be about poetry. Even such an apparently unpromising poem as Theocritus 4 turns out to be

"a dialogue between a sentimental and realistic poet". Both here and with the difficult *Idyll* 7, Segal is forced to special pleading to make his pattern fit. Poetry is also, we find without surprise, the theme of those *Eclogues* which he handles.

The method is to develop patterns of words and moods within each poem. The arguments are ingenious, and the results are in one sense plausible, but in another unsatisfying. It is for instance significant that separate discussions lead to quite different views of the same passages. Of the cup described in Theocritus 1 we read "On the cup joy predominates", but also "It presents a world of fruitless amorous play and hard work." Of the *Eclogues* we read "the last two poems are positive, optimistic, expansive", but again "In *Eclogue* 10 the destructive forces within man are the ascendant." These are not isolated pronouncements but form part of extensive schematic accounts of the poems. All literary criticism must contain a subjective element; but the fact that such contradictions are presented with equal plausibility and equal aplomb is an indication that the procedures which produce them are subjective in another and a deeply disquieting sense.

The encyclopedic urge

By Virgil Nemoianu

MIRCEA ELIADE:
Autobiography
Volume I: 1907-1937: Journey East, Journey West
Translated by MacLinscott Ricketts
335pp. Harper and Row. £12.50.
0 06 062142 7

Mircea Eliade is known by many English-speaking readers as a historian of religion and an analyst of myth, and by a few as the author of fantastic novels and short stories.

Hardly anybody is aware of the huge mass of other writings on which his publications are based. Eliade tells somewhere of how he keeps three kinds of "running commentaries": his scientific notes, fragments and projects; his regular (or social) diary; and finally a "secret diary" destined for the eyes of its own author; this, if I understand him right, he periodically destroys. Extracts from the regular diary (about one third of it) are arranged and grouped for publication every ten years or so (although many manuscripts from Eliade's younger years have been lost or are kept in custody in Bucharest). To make up for this loss but also, perhaps, to summarize in a continuous narrative form what was originally a fragmentary self-reflection, we now have Eliade's autobiography. Most chapters of the present volume were published between 1964 and 1966 in Romanian émigré journals (and partially in book form).

The book is clearly written, with a pleasant candour. Of course, Eliade can afford to be low key: the facts themselves provide the heady stuff. He published his first article when he was fourteen and when he was eighteen, he celebrated his one hundredth publication - most of these were articles on popular entomology in journals for students. At twenty, he was a columnist for one of the leading dailies in Bucharest, writing on virtually any topic he chose (cultural, social, intellectual), as well as contributor to a wide range of other journals. He then received a stipend from the Maharajah of Kassimbazar (on the basis of a perfunctory letter dashed off during an Italian trip) and spent almost three years studying Indian philosophy and mysticism, part of them meditating in a hut in the Himalayas. By the time he was twenty-five, he had taken his doctorate in philosophy, was teaching Buddhism, Yoga, Aristotle and Cusanus, and was becoming a best-selling author of Gothic and erotic novels.

A lot of older Romanian intellectuals were suspicious of Eliade and are hardly to be blamed for it. His scholarly achievements in those years were the first versions of *Yoga* and the *Forge and the Crucible*, as well as a good two-volume critical edition of the nineteenth-century Romanian philologist and historian Hasdeu) were solid, but somewhat difficult to judge by any but a small group of international specialists. His novels were interesting, with experimental passages that remind one today of Huxley, Clide, even Joyce, yet they smack of the sensational and exotic. His two books of criticism were influenced by Chesterton and Papini and seemed - disconcerting or amateurish. Eliade himself explains years by the nagging and desperate feeling that time was in short supply both for him and for the society in which he lived, a feeling soon vindicated, he says, by the veil of silence that fell over Eastern Europe after 1945.

This may well be so, but his work in those years undoubtedly expressed the intellectual atmosphere of inter-war Bucharest: hectic, vibrant, brimming over in its variety. Eliade's book throws light on all the restless and innovative groups of intellectuals who were then clashing with each other precisely because he is telling their story, but his own. The most interesting among these groups was called *Criticism*, which

for a short while managed to establish a dialogue on modernity between young intellectuals of the most diverse orientations, from Marxists to nationalists and mystics. That the group soon broke up was a clear symptom of the deteriorating political and social situation in Romania. Eliade was in this political environment and yet not entirely of it; for him it seems to have had a kind of dream-like unreality. The same unreality is seen also in some of the bitter-sweet love affairs which he recounts (one with a glamorous actress with anthroposophical ambitions, another with the passionate and intelligent daughter of his Indian professor).

The main interest of the book lies in the fact that it is an "archaeology of knowledge". Eliade here explains the circumstances in which some of his most fruitful and intriguing ideas were produced, such as the camouflage of the sacred by the profane. He also explains how his Indian visit led him to postulate the existence of a broad level of neolithic religiosity ("cosmic" religiosity) which constituted the vast base on which the great systematic and historical religions (monotheistic or not) could rise. He had found that beliefs and rituals of the Carpathian shepherds and Danubian peasants bore a marked resemblance to those of the earliest pre-Aryan inhabitants of the Indian plains. He thus began to develop one of the most appealing sides of his philosophy: the unity of the deeper strata of Eastern and Western thought.

Even more fascinating is the lush undergrowth of discarded projects that accumulated in the first thirty years of his writing life. In 1935, for instance, he had plans for some twenty books, some of them social or fantastic novels, others on religious symbolism, myth, Oriental alchemy, a history of Indian philosophy, a study of death rituals in Romanian folklore and so on. As a teenager, he wrote several autobiographical novels, as well as a huge cosmological one, "Memoirs of a Lead Soldier" in which the atoms and molecules of a toy were made to tell the natural history of the universe. All these seem now to have been lost.

How did Eliade get so much done? As an adolescent, he was a Boy Scout (one episode when the boy he was in got caught in a thunderstorm at sea is both amusing and dramatic as recounted here), and even if as a young man he delighted in long evenings of talk with his friends, he imposed genuine hardships on himself by the exercise of his will and relaxed by taking deliberate imaginary plunges into alien historical or geographical settings. The most remarkable experiment of this sort was surely Eliade's later each night and also set his alarm clock to wake him up five minutes earlier - until he got down to only four hours' sleep a night.

Why was he so active? The answer to this question lies buried in the list of his never-implemented projects, which includes a history of Romanian encyclopedists. The aspirations and the anguish of Romanian intellectuals, who thought of themselves as provincial outposts on the confines of European culture, often found a kind of over-compensation in such a kind of universalism, in prodigies of (disorderly) knowledge, and in resorting to an aesthetic management of their material. Their heroes in this direction were Prince Cantemir in the early eighteenth century, the critic-Eliaade Rădulescu in the nineteenth (Eliaade's father, an army officer, changed his family name, so he claimed, out of admiration for him), and the historian Iorga in the early twentieth century. Eliade was clearly seeking for a place in this tradition, and his autobiography (the English translation is accurate, but dull and sticks too close to the original, though it has a good index) reveals both his motives, and his methods. All those who are familiar with his achievements since 1937 will be made aware how the mixture of encyclopedic and aesthetic impulses has shaped his entire career.

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Alfred Deller, the counter-tenor whose artistry has done much to rehabilitate a reach of the male voice too long neglected, was, in the 1950s, waiting to go on at the Royal Festival Hall. He was standing near Sir Malcolm Sargent and the leader of the orchestra. The latter, who had better remain anonymous, said to Sargent, all too audibly: "I see we've got the bearded lady with us." Sargent, according to Peter Giles, "the epitome of the English Gentleman, affected not to hear and is said to have brushed some imaginary dust off his sleeve". The anecdote indicates a prejudice against the high male voice which is based on the pitch of the speaking voice as an index of sex. As James Bowman (himself a distinguished follower of Deller) says in his foreword to this book, "The fact that we sing at a higher pitch than the other male voices does not instantly make us a peculiar breed apart - distant relatives of the castrati. There is no 'mystique'. We are just singers who, for one reason or another, have preferred to develop the upper reaches of our voices, and this has become a natural means of vocal expression."

Mr Giles, rightly, spends some time in his book - the first ever on the counter-tenor - dealing with the phenomenon of the castrato or eunuch (properly *evirato* - devirilized or emasculated). The image of papal shears snipping off testicles to ensure the continuation into adulthood of a fine boy's voice is not strictly accurate. Kingsley Amis's novel *The Alteration* is historically correct in presenting the owner of the voice as rejecting the proposed operation, right too in his ironical dénouement, where the hero becomes what he has heretofore rejected through a disease of the testicles. A lot of Italian castrati swam into fame through a morbid accident. As for those boys who put music before the joys of sex, it was usually a matter of dosing them with opium, placing them in a warm bath, then snipping through the life-lines, so that the testicles eventually shrivelled away. It was a voluntary matter, and the *poetastis clivium* never came into it.

It is necessary to spend some time with the castrati before dealing with the counter-tenor, since those "brilliant artificial voices" eclipsed for a long time the natural falsetto or counter-tenor. There was a castrato in the papal choir as early as 1562, but the last of the Sistine falsetti, Giovanni di Sanctis, died in 1625. England clung to the counter-tenor until the castrato, with all things musically Italian, became popular in the time of Handel. Henry Purcell was himself a fine counter-tenor. Incidentally, the last of the papal castrati, Alessandro Moreschi, who died in 1924, made some gramophone records in 1903-04. It is not a great voice, and the quality of the recording is inevitably poor, but the castrato sound is at least available to those interested in it, like Mr Amis, fascinated by the phenomenon.

There is not, despite the stupidity of that orchestral leader, as much prejudice against the counter-tenor today as there would have been in, say, the Victorian era. Pop-singers favour the higher, or even falsetto, reach of the voice; unisex has been, in some ways, a healthy solvent of a crass and brutal polarity. When Alfred Deller's voice erupted on the air or the concert-platform, it was an older generation of musicians that was disturbed, not the possessors of an innocent ear. The exploitation of the higher reach of the male voice springs from no mental or physical morbidity. In theory, anyone can reach a single segment, thus ensuring a high range which can take advantage of the vibration of an adult sounding chamber - not possible to boy altos.

We accept the four-part mixed chorus - S A T B - without being altogether satisfied with it. Female and male voices do not blend well, any more than (to push the range downwards) trombones blend well with the bass tuba. Wagner saw or heard the need for total homogeneity in his wind sections - hence the development of the heckelphone to complete the family of oboes, and the bass trumpet and the contrabass trombone to ensure a uniformity of tone in the brass. The church choir, with its trebles and male altos, may be regarded as one of the fruits of St

Paul's misogyny, but the oratorio tradition, related to the operatic, accepts the two sexes not only because drama involves sex but also because female voices are adult and hence powerful. Yet the female alto has an unfortunate wooliness and the counter-tenor, which theoretically could replace it, is probably the sound which composers hear in their brains when they pen the second choral line. Unfortunately, there are not yet enough counter-tenors around to be massed chorally. The counter-tenor, like the castrato, is a rare and brilliant solo phenomenon, and it might have been even rarer had not Michael Tippett heard the late great Deller in Canterbury and given him the encouragement he needed. We are thankful to have his voice preserved for all time, granted perhaps its finest exploitation in the Oberon role of Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, written specially for Deller. And we are thankful that he has followers like James Bowman, John Bowman, Paul Esswood and Mr Giles himself.

Giles's book is brief, but it has some of the qualities of a comprehensive guide to counter-tenorship or ship. There are photographs and a discography, an account of the counter-tenor in history, and an admirable appendix on "The Counter-tenor as Artist". He considers the essential "Englishness" of the type of voice and relates it to the "type of line" which Nikolaus Pevsner extols in his *Reith Lectures* collected as *The Englishness of English Art*, the cult of idiosyncrasy, and the persistent conservatism which, by some

paradox, emerges occasionally as the new and even shocking. Dunsie, a fifteenth century how to accept this aspect of the native love of the contrapuntalism which persisted while Europe was trying to think horizontally. Giles finds an "ultra-linear" property in the high male voice.

It is decidedly otherworldly, inhabiting a strange unreal world somewhere in the head, indefinably more than falsetto. It is eccentric and irrational: men do not normally sing as high as women, therefore who but the English would favour over many centuries a purely natural voice which does? The counter-tenor is itself the result of English conservatism. Its continued existence stems from English reluctance to embrace the new or recognise when the game is up, the battle lost!

Shaw, in *Man and Superman*, has a counter-tenor in his infernal quartet. "Ah, here you are, my friend," says Don Juan to the Statue. "Why don't you learn to sing the splendid music Mozart has written for you?" The statue replies: "Unfortunately he has written it for a bass voice. Mine is a counter-tenor." Should we take that "unluckily" seriously? For a decidedly otherworldly voice might have been in order. Let us imagine that invitation to supper soaring over the tombstones. But, alas, Mozart was historically unable to think in counter-tenor terms.

A true-blue radical

By Esmond Wright

NIGEL FISHER:

Harold Macmillan:
A Biography
404pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£12.95.
0 297 77914 1

As if to emphasize his detachment, Nigel Fisher has not gone to the House of Macmillan to publish his biography, and he manages with considerable if not total success to distance himself from one who is, still, in some measure, his hero. It was Macmillan's *The Middle Way* which, he says, led him to become a Conservative, and as an MP, he was much under the influence of the progressive "One Nation", of which Macmillan, R. A. Butler and later Iain Macleod were the chief exponents. He even allowed his subject to read and comment on the text, and confesses to a disappointment. "I had hoped to write a definitive biography of this complex and remarkable man. He preferred it to be a political biography, so some of the more personal aspects of his life have been omitted at his request. I am content to respect his privacy." Macmillan has always been remarkably successful in keeping up his guard.

After being interviewed on a BBC programme in Glasgow in April 1963, the then Prime Minister walked along the corridor in Broad-casting House slowly and in silence. He then stopped suddenly and said to his interviewer: "You were very kind; but I found one of your questions very difficult - the personal question. You know, a Macmillan does not wear his heart on his sleeve."

In a long life - he is now eighty-eight - Macmillan has played many parts, and one can never be sure which is the "real" Macmillan, if indeed he exists other than in the parts he played. Lady Dorothy said, at the time of their marriage in April 1920 at St Margaret's, Westminster, that she thought she was marrying a publisher. But he was already much more: comfortably middle-class by birth and upbringing and much influenced by a strong American mother, he carried round with him throughout his life a photograph of the croft on Arran from which his grandfather Daniel had come; he was Eton and Balliol, a bookish and reflective man of words steeped in the classics and with a mandarin and studied style in the House that was the careful product of an Oxford Union training; but he was also a soldier, with the Grenadier Guards, Loos and the Somme behind him and wounds so severe that it took him four years to recover. Marriage to a duke's daughter allowed him easy transit across class lines - in Butler's phrase, he could "associate happily with the overboard" - and whatever the Scottish habits of work, the plain-living and high-thinking images in his mind, his life-style was that of an English grandee, who felt at ease with lords and as prime minister left to his PR men whatever meetings with journalists might be necessary. And from 1924 there was yet another world to add, that of Stockton-on-Tees, which (except for the years 1929-31) he represented in Parliament from 1924 to 1945.

It is indeed probably true to say that it was the accident of his selection of Stockton as a seat to fight in 1923 that made Macmillan the radical, and in the end the politician, he was. In his autobiography he writes movingly of an alien but whose problems gravely worried him and for which he had a real affection. He had some sympathy for Oswald Mosley's similar policies in 1930, before Mosley formed his New Party; and he had sympathy too with Neville Chamberlain and Lloyd George as social reformers. Richard Crossman used to argue that had Macmillan crossed the floor in the 1930s - like Churchill before him - nothing could have stopped his becoming leader of the Labour Party.

In the 1930s he grew restive under the MacDonald-Baldwin coalition and he expressed his views not only by abstentions in the House but in a series of tracts and books like *The Next Five Years* and *The Middle Way*. As he later explained, what he had tried to do in the latter volume was

to set out a definite plan by which there could be reorganization of industrial production and distribution, and new methods applied to import and export problems, as well as to finance and investment, so as to bring about the degree of central strategic planning necessary in modern society, while preserving the tactical independence of industry and commerce as a whole, and defending political and economic liberty. In this way, by an appropriate combination of methods, not merely could freedom be preserved, but the maximum and the most efficient production and distribution of wealth organized. In a sense, this was a plea for planned capitalism.

"He talks," said Tom Jones, "very much like a professor of Economics." He became leader of a group of young Conservatives (sometimes sarcastically described as the "YMCA") to distinguish them from the "Forty Thieves" which included Bob Boothby, Eustace Percy, Rob Hudson and Terence O'Connor. In the *Socialist Review* he was a "Socialist in disguise". When he was re-elected at Stockton in 1935 it was as an obviously dissenting Tory, a believer in the heresy of planning. It hardly seems radical now, but it was then.

The legacy was permanent. When he addressed the Conservative Political Centre as prime minister in 1958 he said:

Everyone in this hall tonight who is more than twenty-five years of age has actually lived in a period when there were 2 1/2 million unemployed in this country, when 60% of the workers in the ship-building industry and allied industries were out of work and nearly 50% of all workers in the iron and steel trades... I was a Member of Parliament in those days on Teesside. As long as I live I can never forget the impoverishment and demoralization which all this brought with it. I am determined, as far as it lies within human power, never to allow this shadow to fall again upon our country.

In 1962, after sacking Selwyn Lloyd, he said that "an incomes policy was necessary as a permanent feature of our economic life."

In Volume One of his six-volume autobiography, *Winds of Change*, Macmillan congratulated himself: Much that I was advocating in those years has come about: a National Economic Development Council, a Government which controls the Central Bank, and assumes responsibility for the general level of economic activity through the bank rate and the budget; extensions of the public utility principle in transport and fuel; even some welfare distribution of essential foods, such as the expanded school meals service and the orange-juice and cod-liver oil and milk for mothers and babies. The era of strict *laissez-faire* has passed into history, together with the derelict towns, the boarded-up shops, and the barefooted children, and - above all - the long rows of men and women outside the Labour Exchanges.

To foreign affairs, which he came to see as his true métier, he came late, thanks - again, it was something of an accident - to Churchill's selection of him for the post of Minister Resident in North Africa. As a political experience it was clearly the turning-point in Macmillan's life. He appears in it - as always - slightly out of focus. It is as if an Edwardian dressed in sports clothes had strayed into an officers' mess, but was found to be acceptable because he knew the right language, and was anyway on Christian-name terms with the CO. Indeed, he often was given the run of General Alexander's mess, and when President Roosevelt turned up in Cas-

ablanca he was warmly greeted: "Hello, Harold, come in." This, one notes, was the point where Eisenhower suddenly found him acceptable: until then it had been hard going between the Generalissimo and the Minister Resident.

Macmillan's achievement in North Africa was both political and personal. The model now was not Keynes but Castlereagh and Salisbury. He brought Giraud and de Gaulle together; he acted as a successful



Harold Macmillan at a pheasant shoot in the winter 1969-70, from the book reviewed here.

link between the British and the Americans; he was skilful in the delicate negotiations over the surrender of Italy and still more over the communist coup in Greece. As Crossman wrote:

I suspect it was in Algiers, where he could do all the thinking and take all the decisions while like took all the credit, that Harold Macmillan first realized his own capacity for supreme leadership and developed that streak of intellectual recklessness which was to be the cause both of his success and of his failure when he finally reached No. 10.

He was, said his aide John Wyncham, "vicar of the Mediterranean by stealth."

It was in this period too that he made the contacts - Churchill and Eden, Alexander and Eisenhower, Murphy and Bedell Smith - that were to be so important in his years, not so much for himself but for his country. If there is a hero in these years it was General Alexander. If there is a figure whom Macmillan failed fully to understand it was de Gaulle. This, too, was a portent. After his success at Housing and on Eden's smooth succession in 1955, it was natural that he should go to the Foreign Office. He expected to stay for a long time, and it seemed likely to be the climax of his career. The North African experience gave him - perhaps for the first time - confidence in himself, a taste for the Great Game, and as a base on the world stage, whether Africa or Moscow, Washington, Nassau or the Paris de Gaulle. Arguably it gave him too much confidence, the illusion that he spoke for a great power, that resignations of colleagues (like those of Thorneycroft, Powell, and Birch in 1958) were just "little local difficulties", even if they were over fundamental economic issues. It set him permanently in the role of Supermac, the post-Suez magician, urbane and Olympian, unflappable and witty. His achievement at Housing Minister helped at party conferences. But what counted most was the style and the grouse-moor persona; however radical the message, and his radicalism was muted now, the man was seen as true-blue Con-

servative. And nothing warms like success.

These two central threads in the career (which might be called the Stockton Man and the Suez Man) Fisher disentangles expertly, even if along now familiar lines. Thus far he has little to do except summarize his subject's own record. Macmillan's more than 4,000 pages serve him as quarry - a faithful and detailed, albeit rather flat, account of Macmillan's political life and times; Roy Jenkins once called it "Mac minute by minute". Here the 4,000 pages are happily reduced to 370. Macmillan's five pages on the Spanish Civil War are reduced to six lines; his 250 on Italy and Greece are down to seventeen. Fisher is gentler on Rab than was Macmillan; he is much more open about his relations with Eden; he does not hide, as Macmillan does, the collusion with Israel at Suez. Inevitably some of Macmillan's sparkling quotes are missing. ("The Second War was fought by great generals from their caravans. The First War was conducted by means of lesser qualities from their chateaux.") The survey of Supermac's achievements recounts the over-active busy-ness of the Prime Ministership: Africa for the "wind of change", Paris in 1960 for the Summit fiasco, Washington to pose as avuncular guide to a young president, Nassau, Skybolt, Polaris and the Test-Ban Treaty. No doubt it was all intoxicating, for his drug had never been rank or title but power and influence; in Volume Five of his own life-story, Macmillan devotes 400 out of 500 pages to this summary. The economic problems and the Treasury warnings were brushed aside; there were now fewer speeches in the House. For a time he was opposed to having a PRO. That could all be left to Question Time in the House and to parliamentary statements and debates. "After all," he said, "we politicians are trained in the art of evasion."

It is when he reaches the summer of 1961 that Fisher begins to write his own book. He is explicit about the mistakes, which Macmillan later recognized as such himself. First came the hurried dismissal of Selwyn Lloyd, hidden as it was behind the signing of six other ministers, the night of the long knives of July 1961 for ever caught by the savagery of Jeremy Thorpe's comment: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his friends for his life." Fisher says generously that "the strain and fatigue of high office may well have impaired his hitherto almost impeccable political judgement", a view shared by Lord Fraser of Kilmorack, the ablest member of Macmillan's secretariat. The error, however, was by the Vassall and Fremont affairs and the satire of *That Was The Week That Was* and of *Private Eye* in 1962-63, marked the sudden appearance of a new image, that of a tired old man out of touch with the mood of the day. In a speech in the House that was for once out of character, he admitted his lack of knowledge of and distaste for the *demi-monde*, a raffish, theatrical, bohemian society "where no one really knows anyone, and everyone is darling". This was no longer the worldly-wise, sceptic, aware of his own frailties, but an old-style Calvinist that his grandfather would have recognized, bewildered by the permissive society.

To this he added the most serious error of all, the timing of his resignation in 1963. The prostate illness was real and acute enough, but he "could easily have delayed the announcement of his resignation", as he himself subsequently recognized. The leadership struggle was as a result fought out in the 1963 Blackpool Conference in full view of the television cameras. It was so heady an occasion that it swept Lord Hailsham into his own errors of judgement - and Hailsham was clearly Macmillan's first choice, and embittered Macmillan, whom he saw as the saviour of the next generation, the two men who, he thought, had "real genius". In permitting the succession to be publicly debated on television, Macmillan - whatever his state of

health - displayed an appalling loss of his hitherto mastery touch. Sir Alec Douglas-Home almost held on in 1964, and had he done so, he would have permanently altered the shape of British politics, since the Left was in disarray. He had not, however, been helped by the pictures of ambitious men visibly in conflict over the leadership.

Fisher spells all this out with commendable frankness. He is equally frank in implying that Macmillan was making - and had been making for years - two much more culpable errors. By his economic expedients - like the National Incomes Commission set up without his Chancellor's knowledge, by his indifference to domestic issues and the easy casualness with which he accepted that a little inflation was a good thing, and that an atmosphere of prosperity and manipulation of the economy would win the electoral prizes - he carried the memories of Stockton from one era to guide the country through another. Fisher is aware too, but does not say quite loudly enough, that Macmillan was as guilty as were Churchill, Eden and Butler in ignoring Europe, in refusing to join the Six, especially when he had responsibility as Foreign Secretary in 1955, and in delaying for nearly a decade the decision that de Gaulle vetoed in 1963. In all his successes in North Africa he had not won over de Gaulle. In 1950 Macmillan said "Europe is finished. It is sinking; it is like Greece after the second Peloponnesian War"; a young man should emigrate, he said, to the United States. It was a view that cost his country dear.

What destroyed him in the end was his own cynicism. He was for a long time a master at tactics. What he had (or has) in rare abundance were style and charm, elegance and the grand manner. In the end - though not at first - television gave him charisma. These qualities owed nothing either to Stockton or to Suez, but came from his taste for the ways, not of a Tory Democrat but of a White Grandee, even if he saw himself as in the line of descent from Darius (whose estate he had after all, been bought for him by just such a White Grandee; for Portlands read Cavendishes). His mind at its best could be discursive and scintillating and - until 1962 - touched by a constant sense of adventure and romance. Brendan Bracken wrote of him in 1955 that he was remarkable, imaginative and amusing, "and possessed of a judgement that is almost always wrong".

From 1955 on he played a series of parts, and played them brilliantly for almost seven years. But throughout these years he was neglectful of the economic realities of Britain - which a longer spell at the Treasury might have given him - and of the economic and political possibilities of European growth. Paradoxically, these were the areas which twenty and twenty-five years before had been those of his greatest strength. The radicalism and irreverence had gone. Indeed, as with Atlee by 1949, as with Eden within nine months of becoming prime minister, as with Harold Wilson by 1967, after a brilliant beginning came a sad end. But while his luck held, he and his country never had it so good. And he is fortunate to have attracted to himself among a legion of devotees, so able, honest and readable a biographer as Sir Nigel Fisher.

Ministers of the Crown by D. A. Pickrl (135pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £7.95, 0 7100 0916) lists the holders of ministerial posts, senior and junior, in most cases from the earliest known date. It is the publisher's belief that there does not exist any other work in which this information can be found; "only Haydn's *Book of Days*, now nearly a century old, has attempted anything similar". There have been seventy-one Prime Ministers. The first Lord Chancellor and Keeper of the Great Seal was Horfist (1068-1070). He was immediately followed by Osmond, Maurice and Gerard. The first Postmaster General (1655) was John Thurloe.

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Céleste
Camden Plaza Cinema

It sounds an impossible task: a film in German, with English subtitles, about a great French writer. Joseph Losey's famous project of bringing Proust to the screen, with the help of Harold Pinter and Barbara Bray, seems to have gone into eclipse: how, after all, could a film do justice to so elaborate a masterpiece, and one so intimately dependent on language and its prismatic tensions? And *Céleste* is not even about *A la recherche du temps perdu*: its subject is not Proust himself, lying pale and precious in his littered bed, distilling the endless manuscript. No: the subject is Céleste Albaret, his faithful housekeeper - nursemaid, secretary - skivvy - nother-substitute - *gouvernante*, during the last eight years of his life.

And the film, like Céleste's life, is virtually confined to Proust's apartment. All we see, for the most part, are two rooms: the imperious sick-room study, from which the bell shrills to summon Céleste from the kitchen. Hour after hour, she sits there, and we watch her, waiting, while the clock ticks. Then the ritual: hot milk, carefully poured; boiling water; the coffee filter machine; the tray; the quiet obedience to the bell. Only very briefly do we quit the apartment - for the last, sad 1914 trip to Cabourg; for reminiscences about the death of Céleste's mother at Auxillat; for lingering, yearning looks at a grey, deserted Paris. Apart from Céleste's husband, no one comes to visit until near the end. The Poulet Quartet - played here by the Barbirolli - arrive to perform César. Frank's quietest in D; later, the Goncourt committee and the doctors, including Proust's brother, fuss and bluster about. Otherwise, all seems silence and devotion, service at a living shrine.

So how on earth has Percy Adlon made such a gripping film? First, by subduing our expectations, and making us attend - as the layout of poetry does when we see it on the page. The credits are deliberately stealthy. On the right of the screen, through an open doorway, we see Céleste (played by Eva Mattes) sit-

ting on her kitchen chair, a patient figure from an interior by Vermeer. On the left, the credits, punctuated by single phrases from the César Frank. Does this tell us, forbiddingly, "Art film ahead"? Hardly, but it prepares us to watch and listen intently. Then, once we access the film's restricted space, it comes to life like a stage. As in the work of Ermanno Olmi, everyday objects and actions take on their full significance in the irrecoverable moment.

In that sense, Adlon's film is truly Proustian. At the end of it, when Proust is dead, the tired, weary, husky of Paul Helleu's deathbed, with the great work a scatter of scrawled paper and the world collapsed, we feel the poignant pointlessness when Céleste snips a lock of his hair to cradle in her hands. We know that the book will live for him - a monument? A kind of immortality? But we also know that Céleste never read it all; that what mattered to her was having served the man she described as "un grand seigneur" who was also a great tyrant, and a great baby, and a genius.

She waited fifty years before telling her story to Georges Belmont, who made it of the book *Monsieur Proust*, on which this film is based. A remarkable book - artful, yet truthful, faithful to Céleste, yet full of deeper resonance, informed by knowledge and love of Proust's great work. The film can only select from the storehouse: it omits, for example, the changes of address and, most memorable for many people, the book's final story, about the opal that Proust gave Céleste, who treasured it, then one day lost it. It turned up again - in a mouthful of salad that her daughter was eating.

Proust, in *Céleste*, is played by Jürgen Arndt. He looks amazingly authentic, save in some of his movements, capering to show Céleste how people had behaved at dinner. His eyes, those brooding, hooded, boiled eyes, tell all that he felt. And Eva Mattes looks everything that can be imagined from pictures of Céleste in old age. After a while, even the German on the soundtrack ceases to seem intrusive. As a study of master and servant, feudally free with each other within the limits both accept; as a recreation of Proust and Céleste; as an evocation of past time; as a series of genre interiors - this film is a delight.



Madonna and Child with the infant St John, a marble tondo by Michelangelo. One of the items in the Royal Academy's collection, which is on show in the Royal Academy Retrospective exhibition until May 23.

A cotton-wool life

By Patricia Craig

Conversation with a Cupboard Man
Lyric Studio Theatre, Hammersmith

Ian McEwan's story, which is part allegory and part case history, transfers easily to the stage, requiring no adaptation at all and very few props: a table, a chair, a plate, knife and fork, three empty Coca Cola bottles and an enormous wardrobe serve to create an appropriate setting. The conversation is really a monologue, with the audience standing in for the postulated social worker who listens to the "cupboard man's" unimpassioned account of his vicissitudes.

It's a sorry story. The speaker (well played by Robin Edwards, in crumpled dressing gown, socks and pyjamas, all Cockney dejection and

defensiveness) embodies the awful effects of mothers' efforts to keep their children young: "When I was still trying to tie a bit round my neck". A protracted babyhood followed by an abrupt growing-up - and truly the adult world, as the narrator finds it, has little to recommend it. It is a place of institutions, mental jobs, thieving, mockery, ugliness, deformity, perversion of the sexual instinct, subservience, deviousness and cruelty. He learns that if someone tries to roast you in an oven, however playfully, you may retaliate by tipping a pan of boiling oil into his lap. He also learns that you will probably be ruined up in the first place - in his case, "the old cotton-wool life, warm and safe."

Hence the cupboard, the hopelessness and the inertia - and the two views of mother's womb as a place of horror (the heated oven) and of goodness (a wardrobe well padded with blankets and cushions). Though the dramatization, like the story, is not without its moments of humour ("I'd rather be lying on the floor gurgling to myself than talking to you") it's the seediness and abnormality of things that are stressed - to good effect. Here you have a portrait of someone who is the skeleton in his own cupboard.

has a purpose, nothing is extraneous. The changes have had, therefore, a knock-on effect: they may have made characters more credible, but have simultaneously undone the carefully constructed machinery of the plot. A cunning criminal scheme has to depend on chance, rather than foresight, and Poirot's little grey cells are aided by coincidence, not logic.

The reader of one of these stories waits impatiently for the murder so that Poirot can get down to the real business of the book - detection. In the film the reverse occurs. After the murder, with an endless series of flashbacks, and recapitulations, a numbing boredom begins to set in, which even Poirot, in desperation adopting the mannerisms of a M. Hulot, cannot dispel. Other characters - James Mason and Sylvia Miles as a married pair of Broadway producers; Nicholas Clay as a handsome young Irishman and Jane Birkin as his mousy wife - are either given no opportunity to dispel the gloom, or muffed the one they receive. (out of period, however) between Maggie Smith and her old friend and rival Ariana Marshall (Diana Rigg), vamps and show business star, unfortunately come to a premature end.

It's certainly always beautiful to look at; go, but leave after the murder, and return to read Agatha Christie.

commentary

Mild menace of the critic Family features

By Robert Hewison

PEN Writers' Day
Purcell Room

PEN's Writers' Days are organized for the benefit and enjoyment of writers, and British writers feel under threat. Though Lord Goodman's avuncular after-lunch speech made reference to the *Romans* trial, these writers feel menaced, not by the censor or the gaoles, but by the critic.

Or so Margaret Drabble would have us believe. This was the topic of her lecture "Professionals and Amateurs: the Effects of Literary Criticism on the novelist", which was delivered at PEN's fourth Writers' Day on March 13. It had been publicized in advance as a major attack on the critics, but Margaret Drabble is something of a critic herself, and in the best tradition of English literary controversy, it turned out to be milder than that. Miss Drabble was not angry, but worried. Her most polemical stroke was to describe critics as the professionals, implying that novelists are amateurs, though her own position makes the distinction ambiguous. Since she concluded by paying tribute to the anonymous reviewer of her early works in the *TLS* "so censorious, but so bracing", it was plain that her complaint was not about the existence of critics, but about the terms of her current relationship with them.

The establishment of University English departments has professionalized the art of analysis and discrimination, and has produced - according to Drabble - an invidious self-consciousness among writers: "the novel and the novelist have suffered from the stress on the novel as an art form". It has caused a departmentalization among critics, and also publishers. Both divide novels and novelists into those that are serious and those that are bestsellers (though she might have added that critics and publishers have opposing priorities). Similarly, the critical tradition divides readers into the serious and unserious, with an implied contempt for the unserious that appears to include the majority of the female population. "When I hear about keeping up standards, I go into another room."

While most novels are dismissed as entertainment, the serious novelist is driven into the arms of the university, and for economic reasons cannot live any other way, even though the campus novel that often results is a narrow work, the closing of a small circle. (In a digression on feminist criticism Miss Drabble complained of being "pestered by students who would monitor her creative process. Though some critical insights were

useful "these women should write their own novels"). Finally, however, she found consolation in the degree of professionalism and specialization that academic criticism has now reached. Structuralism has removed the author so far from the text that "the critics have argued themselves out of our way". While the critics debate (and, she ingeniously suggested, write autobiography by other means), the writer, cast go home, read *The Bookeller*, chop up onion, or work on a novel, without worrying about what the critics say.

"What we read for and what we write for is for something else than criticism," was Margaret Drabble's modest point. Mario Soldati, who has recently become Chairman of Italian PEN, began his lecture with a variation on this theme, the artist's unconsciousness about his art. "In order to write novels you must not know how to write them." Much of his lecture was cast in the form of a belle-lettiste short story (Soldati's forte), and passing through Cocteau's dictum on style as a measure of the artist's failure, the effect of the invention of photography on painting, and distinctions between the true and the false aim of the artist, between the apparent and real nature of his subject, we arrived at the Death of God. All contemporary literature, he suggested, whether by atheists or believers, was concerned with the vacuum left by the disappearance of faith. Soldati's dialectics left this listener confused, but the audience was enraptured by his continental mode of address.

For a writers' day, the three hundred or more who attended had little to say themselves, for there were no questions or discussion. Though both Drabble and Soldati referred in passing to the necessity of earning a living, and there were some sour comments from the platform on the efficiency of publishers, there seemed a general satisfaction with the status quo, even with the state of criticism.

Coming out of the gallery

By Tanya Harrod

Art and Architecture: A Conference
A New Partnership: An Exhibition
ICA

In 1956 the Whitechapel show *This is Tomorrow* explored the possibilities of cooperation between architects, painters and sculptors. In the catalogue Lawrence Alloway wrote "For a start, it would be realistic to replace the ideal picture of collaboration (derived from a story fiction of the middle ages) by a notion of antagonistic co-operation."

'At this conference on the same subject the "rosy fiction" mediated through the writings of Morris and Ruskin was continually invoked. No one was ashamed to state the obvious: for example Joseph Rykwert read a Renaissance contract for an altarpiece and pointed out that a contemporary artist would be unlikely to sign such a document. The horrors of industrialization, described in *News from Nowhere* and *The Nature of Gothic*, were passionately reaffirmed by Leon Krier.

In a seminar on "Structure and Decoration" Krier's disenchantment with modernism in painting and sculpture as well as architecture was reiterated. It was odd to hear Gavin Stamp describe one of Epstein's finest statues for the former BMA building in the Strand as "obscene". Like Krier, Stamp felt that artists should give up what used to be called the "brave days of the 1960s" "amplified modernism", and set about creating craftsmanship work employing a local public language.

Several speakers showed slides to illustrate the form this language

might take. Charles Jencks gave us the Parthenon, the west portal at Chartres and Thomas Tresham's lodge, as well as classics of post-modernism like Venturi's Football Hall of Fame. The sculptor John Maine's slides of stone walls and Japanese raked gardens revealed the power and economy of simple patterns and structures. Stamp's choices were nostalgically eclectic - Belcher's Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Albert Memorial, Schiller's St Andrew's Chapel in Westminster Cathedral. His final choice, Jagger's Artillery Memorial, was of especial interest, for the memorials erected to the Great War dead were the last group of widely admired public sculptures.

That there were no successors to these monuments is surely of crucial interest and in fact only one speaker, Kenneth Frampton, examined why a public language of art has ceased to exist. Not a reactionary, he did not simply blame modernism but talked rather of a defused social climate unable to give a creative charge to artists. Art's retreat into the galleries was symptomatic of what he called the "privatization" of our lives. The public realm had been destroyed by the mass media but Frampton suggested that land art, which is necessarily public, was the natural successor to the sculptural monument and could restore to us a sense of public space.

Oddly enough the best of the five artist/architect collaborations entitled *A New Partnership* seemed close to Frampton's vision. This was Paul Neagu and John Miller's "A Sense of Absence", a mysterious and massive inscribed platform of York stone over which a plumb line was suspended. The other works in this exhibition were elegant and provisional, except for Anthony Caro's ma-

quette for a bridge linking two buildings in Los Angeles. This was really a Caro sculpture which resembled a bridge. The architect, Barton Myers, had to compromise by lowering the height of his building and this was clearly a source of some delight to Caro.

The discussions between practitioners and administrators revealed an eagerness to cooperate. The architects wanted to build less austere buildings, the artists appeared keen to come out of the galleries, the administrators anxious to educate the public, the patrons, in the shape of three property developers, finally willing to commission works of art. Fourteen conference resolutions were passed, the most important pressing for some sort of "Percentage for Art" legislation. Michael Sandle alone seemed entirely dissatisfied. He did not want his sculptures to be demystified, for public consumption and he did not like Colin Amery's elegant summing up. In retrospect it seems odd that he had not been invited to speak as he is one of the few sculptors working today who actively aims to create public monuments: perhaps it is not surprising that they are works of unrelieved despair.

The 1982 London Book Fair - the eleventh of its kind, the first for eighteen months and the largest ever - will take place at the Barbican Arts Centre on April 6, 7 and 8. The London Academic Book Fair will have over 500 exhibitors including publishers, distributors, printers, learned societies, photo-agencies and photo libraries. The Publishers Association will be holding a seminar during the course of the fair. Further information is available from The Director, London Book Fair, 16 Penbridge Road, London W11.

New Oxford books: Law

Discovery

A Comparison between English and American Civil Discovery Law with Reform Proposals
Julius Byron Levine

In this book discovery is put into perspective as an antidote to undesirable gamesmanship in adversary legal systems. Both empirical evidence and legal theory are brought to bear in a critical comparison of English and American discovery, and reforms are proposed for both countries. £18

The Legal Aspect of Money

F. A. Mann

The fourth edition of this valuable monograph on the law of money has been thoroughly revised and updated to take account of the considerable developments in the national and international law since the appearance of the third edition in 1971. It has achieved classic status, and... is by far the most impressive contribution to the legal learning on the matters to which it is devoted. *Cambridge Law Journal*. Fourth edition £35

German Private and Commercial Law

An Introduction
Norbert Horn, H. Kötz, and Tony Weir

The aim of this volume is to introduce the lawyer working in one of the common law jurisdictions to the study of German law. It begins with an historical introduction and a short description of the German constitution and legal system. There follow chapters on Contract; Breach of Contract; Sale; Tort; Property; Family Law; Nationality; Commercial Law; Partnerships and Companies; Including Taxation; Competition; and Labour Law. £18.50 paperback £10.50

International Law and the Use of Force by States

Ian Brownlie

This is a reissue of Professor Brownlie's important book, which has been out of print since September 1979. There is no question... but that this book will be generally regarded as indispensable to any library of repute and will become a standard work of reference. *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*. £35

Courts, Prosecution, and Conviction

Michael McConville and John Baldwin

This work provides us with the most detailed account yet published of those aspects of Crown Court trial which take place in the absence of the jury and complements the authors' earlier book on the behaviour of the jury itself. It is soundly argued, supported by a great deal of statistical evidence and casts further light on the realities of a process which until recently was shrouded in mystery. *The Times Higher Education Supplement*. £12

Oxford University Press

A small publishing house: the first year

By Michael Mason

At the time of the merger between the Virago Press and Chatto and Windus, the *Guardian* printed a feature on radical publishing. Only two presses were discussed apart from Virago itself: the Writers' and Readers' Cooperative and the firm which I recently set up with three partners, Junction Books. No doubt we were lucky that the *Guardian* thought of us for their feature, but it was a pleasing token of recognition for everyone in the firm (which now has a staff of eight) that they did. We have made a small but unmistakable profit in our first full year of trading, which is another token of recognition, and in a more important quarter: the market-place. In the manner of all new enterprises we had always behaved as if such successes were our way. More privately, perhaps, we had been too sensible - too conscious of the difficulties of what we were undertaking - not to be slightly surprised that the consumers and the media have liked us as much as they do.

Our idea of a publishing firm has worked at a time when this is felt to be unusual, so it may be of interest if I describe what that idea amounts to. It would be misleading to suggest that our policy has not altered over the last eighteen months: some of the principles we now feel most confident in represent changes of tack, responses to unforeseen discoveries about the business of acquiring, preparing and selling good books. And our idea is not just a blueprint for the early success of a small publisher: many of its features do not proceed from commercial thinking, but from the feelings of those involved about what books, and what kind of enterprise, they wished to be associated with.

Books as collectibles

By Robert Halsband

Los Angeles Antiquarian Book Fair

Somehow Los Angeles does not spring to mind as a setting for antiquarian books, yet for the fifteenth time the International Antiquarian Book Fair, sponsored by its American branch, convened there on February 18-19, and 20. (These annual fairs in California alternate between San Francisco and Los Angeles.) "Rare Book Week in Los Angeles," proclaimed Mayor Tom Bradley, who as candidate for governor is rarin' to occupy the mansion in Sacramento. (One hopes he will continue to favour Rare Books even there; under Governor Reagan a treasury official once proposed that the University of California sell off its rare books because they were not being used frequently enough to justify their value as an investment.) At the Ambassador Hotel, an immense pink stucco pile set far back on Wilshire Boulevard, a landmark of elegance before the city slouched westward, the California ambience was inescapable. Guests at the preliminary dinner had to weave their way through a tangle of cables in the lobby, where an episode from the television serial "Flamingo Road" was being filmed.

Not surprisingly, more than half of the 105 American dealers were Californians, who showed an abundance of Western material, printed or manuscript, ephemeral or substantial. But they also believe (with good reason) that California is hospitable to literary materials from outside their state, and that nothing is too odd or too expensive to sell. The most pricey item, offered by the *doyen* of Los Angeles bookmen, was the *Mariners Mirror* of 1588, "price on application" - \$85,000. Another dealer was willing to part with Beethoven's autograph revisions (very few) of the Emperor Concerto for \$45,000. But these were the peaks of the fair, and it is unlikely that any collector was intrepid enough to scale them. A great many items were modestly priced for modest collectors. One exhibitor, among seventeen English dealers who had crossed the ocean and a continent to deal at the fair, remarked that inexpensive books sold briskly. The other European dealers were two from the Netherlands, and one from West Germany, who offered Japanese prints and seemed to be flourishing, thanks to interest on the West Coast in Far Eastern art and philosophy.

Among the more curious offerings, a Los Angeles dealer showed Sumerian clay tablets, most of them from about 2,000 B.C. (Translations were provided.) These "documents" record simple business transactions in commodities or animals or lands or even the work of two "female foremen" which added up to "720 women-days". Such a clay tablet could be purchased for as little as \$325. At the other chronological extreme, fiction published almost yesterday was abundantly displayed, and the scintillating reported a great surge in collecting contemporary fiction - not only prestigious novels that

We are "small", but our financial dimensions (the subject of one of our earliest and necessarily most hard-headed decisions) could have been smaller. We pitched our starting capital at £45,000, a sum made up of personal money and bank facilities. We are thought of as "radical", because we have published a book by David Leigh on secrecy, for example, and an important history of lesbianism. But the adjective only describes the political and social studies books on our list. Over half that list is composed of titles on history, popular science, literature and art history (there are of course politically radical approaches to these subjects, but we have not only sought books which adopt them). The radical tendency today of our political books reflects our own attitudes; it is also true today that people with leftward beliefs seem to be more keen than people on the right to acquire and study serious books bearing on the questions that matter to them - and "alternative" bookshops are often exceptionally responsible and reliable as business associates.

The diversity of the list as a whole also springs from the personalities in the firm. No one who joined us on the editorial side brought with them a particular specialization in publishing let alone a list of books in train, but we were all alert people with a variety of interests, so a mixed list seemed appropriate and workable. We have, however, always applied a definite idea about the level of our books. From the start we have supposed that there is a market for non-fiction books that don't condescend to the reader, but which are also readily intelligible without a specialized academic background - even if their subject-matter does often form part of syllabuses, and even if their authors are academics.

At last good projects are starting

to come our way, unsought, at a reasonable rate. Hitherto almost all our titles have been discovered or commissioned; the result of a digging effort that would dismay the ordinary acquiring editor. Our single biggest difficulty in our early growth has been getting good books, despite what we judge to be our attractions for an author. We pay decent advances, and standard royalties. We publish fast (often in less than five months) - a founding principle in our policy that has become something of a compulsory performance as we race to fill empty slots in our calendar. But hypertrophied and niggardly firms with established reputations (however hazy) exert their irrational fascination, and authors often seem to put a surprisingly low valuation on efficiency and considerateness.

In the early stages we overestimated the market. Our print runs have shortened by about thirty per cent (though, happily, we have reprinted a good proportion of our titles); our list has necessarily expanded (we published about twenty-five books last year); and our prices have had to rise slightly. To an extent we are in the British publisher's pasture of more titles and fewer books, and we regret the tendency, and, as any good press should, we want to reverse it. We are seeking, rather than recouling from, books with bigger readerships and more sensible prices, such as reference books.

A very propitious development, which has enabled us to undo some of the bad effects of increased unit costs, is the new responsiveness towards quite highly-priced paperbacks in the British book business. Perceptibly, in the months since we started, libraries, bookshops, customers and literary editors have changed in their response to the paperback book priced at around £2. Our standard plan for any book is now a split

edition; this we did not anticipate eighteen months ago. The change of attitude in the editorial offices has perhaps been the most marked, and it has mattered to us a good deal. We have done well in terms of coverage in newspapers and periodicals, but tight schedules and current problems in the book-casting industry have often obliged us to deliver paperbacks to the literary editors. Obligingly, they have still reviewed them.

At the risk of losing that editorial goodwill I shall admit that we do little advertising in the press. We have our own publicity manager, but she spends more time getting our authors on radio than drafting advertising copy. Unfortunately for the selling advertising space, the publishing wisdom that even a bad review is worth more than an advertisement seems to be correct. Last year we published a book on Virginia Woolf which claimed that she was not mad, and one on Tolkien which claimed that he had imitated childhood reading such as *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Thirty-nine Steps*. These claims displeased many critics; they went at some length into the reasons for their displeasure and the books have prospered.

Small publicity budgets are not unusual for small publishers, but another aspect of our sales effort is certainly that we undertake all our British representation ourselves, employing the equivalent of two full-time reps to visit the 400 or so bookshops that regularly stock us, at four-monthly intervals. This is an instance of a policy that was not foreseen in our early plans. In fact, these plans were unspecific on the question of representation, but we were anxious about it. The thought that our acquiring, editing, designing and

publicity efforts for a book would be hamstrung at the last moment - at the bottom of a freelance rep's briefcase - was dispiriting. When the time came, we decided to control the important phase of our activities directly. We have achieved subscriptions from bookshops and wholesalers, and durable contacts with these outlets, which persuades us that this was the right move, though it was made at an early stage. Not only the immediate cost has been justified, but there has been an unexpected financial benefit: there are small publishers in Britain and America whose books require to be represented with the same scale and emphasis as our own, and we are already carrying the titles of several such firms into the shops with better results, we believe, than they would have achieved through the bigger organizations.

Claims to have proved the merits of a particular policy in book publishing are bound to be doubtful. Unlike most commercial enterprises, publishing yields a quite new object every few days or weeks - or at least sufficiently new that you can never properly experiment with variations on those aspects of it which remain fixed. Because the book you bind in paper is a quite different text from the one you issue in hardback in the same month you cannot tell how touch their different achievements in the market are due to their format. This will perhaps sound unconvincing, but my impression from the experience of founding and sharing the direction of a small publishing firm is that a successful book, of our variety, will chiefly be so because of virtue in its text. That is to say, lucid, knowledgeable and informative writing gets its reward.

Among this week's contributors

ALAN BELL is the Librarian of Rhodes House, Oxford.

IAN BELL is the author of *The Dominican Republic*, 1981.

ANTHONY BURGESS's most recent novel is *Earthly Powers*, 1980.

JAMES CAMPBELL was the editor of the *New Edinburgh Review*, until 1981.

OWEN DUDLEY EDWARDS is Reader in History at the University of Edinburgh. His most recent book is *Burke and Hare*, 1980.

P. E. EASTERLING is a Fellow of Newnham College, Cambridge.

ROGER GARPITT's most recent collection of poems, *The Broken Road* will be published shortly.

JOHN GAGE's edition of *The Collected Correspondence of J. M. W. Turner* appeared in 1980.

JASPER GREFFIN is Tutor in Classics at Balliol College, Oxford. His *Snobs* will be published this month.

ROBERT HALSBAND is Professor of English at the University of Illinois.

GEOFFREY HOSKING's *Beyond Socialist Realism: Fiction Since 'Ivan Denisovich'* was published in 1980.

JAMES HUNTER is the author of *The Making of the Crofting Community*, 1976.

GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI's most recent novel *The Air We Breathe* was published last year.

ALEXANDER KAZHDAN is Professor at the Dumbarton Oaks Centre for Byzantine Studies, Harvard University.

BRUCE LINDMAN is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at the University of St. Andrews. His books include *The Jacobite Rising in Britain*, 1980, and *Scotland 1746-1832*, 1981.

RUAN McLEAN's books include *Victorian Publishers' Book-bindings in Cloth and Leather*, 1973.

RICHARD MAYNE's books include *The Europeans: Who Are We?*, 1972, and a translation of Jean Monnet's *Memoirs*, 1978.

VIVIAN MERCIER is Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His books include *Beckett Beckett*, 1977.

ROSALIND MITCHEISON is Professor of Economic History at the University of Edinburgh.

JOHN MOLE's most recent collection of poems is *From the House Opposite*, 1980.

VIRGIL NEMOIANU teaches Comparative Literature at the Catholic University of America, Washington DC.

S. J. NEWMAN teaches English Literature at the University of Liverpool.

PAT ROGERS is the author of *The Augustan Vision*, 1974, and *Henry Fielding: A Biography*, 1979.

JOHN ROOSTER is a lecturer in Modern History at the University of Durham and editor of the journal *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*.

WILLIAM SCAMMELL's most recent collection of poems is *Yes and No*, 1979.

ROGER SCRUTON is the author of *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 1980, and *From Descartes to Wittgenstein: A Short History of Modern Philosophy*, 1981.

T. C. SMOUT is Professor of Scottish History at the University of St. Andrews.

MARTIN SWALES is Professor of German at University College London.

JULIAN SYMONS's books include *The Thirties*, 1975, and the crime novel *Sweet Adelaide*, 1980.

HUGH THOMAS's books include *The Cuban Revolution*, 1977, and *An Unfinished History of the World*, 1979.

M. J. TILLY is a Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge.

ESMOND WRIGHT was MP for Glaston (Pollock) from 1967 to 1970 and Principal of Swinton Conservative College from 1972 to 1976.

to the editor

'The White Hotel'

Sir, - I have declared my indebtedness in *The White Hotel* to the eye-witness account of Babi Yar, both in the formal acknowledgments and in innumerable interviews. Indeed, as a consequence of increased interest in Kuznetsov's *Babi Yar*, where Dina Pronicheva's testimony appears, my American paperback publishers, Pocket Books, are re-issuing it, and quoting my novel in its advertisements. *The White Hotel* is a synthesis of different visions and different voices: it asks only for readers with a sensibility to respond to it as a unity, and on the whole it has been fortunate in finding such readers.

Since my account of Babi Yar (Part V) is three times the length of Dina Pronicheva's comparable account, and equally spare in style, it would seem obvious that something more than a "superficial re-working" (D. A. Kenrick, *Letters*, March 26) is taking place. This section is where my heroine, Lisa Erdman, changes from being Lisa an individual to Lisa in history - an anonymous victim. It is this transition, reflected in style as well as content, which has moved and disturbed many readers. From individual self-expression she moves to the common fate. From the infinitely varied world of narrative fiction we move to a world in which fiction is not only severely constrained but irrelevant.

At the outset of Part V, the narrative voice is still largely authorial (though affected by Pronicheva's tone) because there is still room for fiction; Lisa is still a person. But gradually her individuality is taken from her on that road to the ravine; and gradually the only appropriate voice becomes that voice which is like a recording camera: the voice of one who was there. It would have been perfectly easy for me to have avoided the possibility of such attacks as Kenrick's, through some spurious "imaginative re-creation"; but it would have been wrong. The witness's testimony was the truthful voice of the narrative at that point: "It started to get dark", etc. This is how it was - for all the victims. It could not be altered. The time for imagination was before; and, in my novel, after imagination, at the point quoted by Kenrick, is exhausted in the effort to take in the unimaginable which happened.

Like Mr Kenrick, I wish the *Babi Yar* acknowledgment was as prominent in the Penguin edition as it is in the Gollancz hardback; but I also wish that his version was more inclusive and comprehensive, able to see the novel as a whole. Like any serious novel, *The White Hotel* is for living in completely, or not at all.

D. M. THOMAS.

10 Greyfriars Avenue, Hereford.

Sir, - Your correspondent D. A. Kenrick (*Letters*, March 26) fails to mention two important points in his attack on D. M. Thomas. First, the copyright page acknowledgment specifically mentions the testimony of Dina Pronicheva as being taken from pp 220-1 of the Penguin edition, the author of *The White Hotel* makes his procedure plain:

Dina survived to be the only witness, the sole authority for what Lisa saw and felt. Yet it had happened thirty thousand times; always in the same way and always different. Nor can the living ever speak for the dead.

Thomas, in other words, brings his heroine to die at Babi Yar. He is faced with the problem of describing a historical event for which there is only one witness. He uses the words of the historical witness in order to tell us what his heroine saw and heard. He then tells us, within the novel itself, that this is what he has done. Finally, he makes a grateful acknowledgment to Kuznetsov, naming both his English and his American publishers, and pointing the reader to the main area of indebtedness. This is done on the copyright

page because that is what such pages are for.

D. M. Thomas also gives a detailed note on his indebtedness to Freud. This is not a matter of copyright. Without Freud's work, Thomas's whole artistic and intellectual approach would have been impossible. *The White Hotel* could not have been written. On the other hand, there were other massacres beside Babi Yar. The debt to Freud is fundamental. The debt to Kuznetsov's unique witness is contingent. Both are acknowledged as they should be.

JAMES FENTON.

1 Bartlemas Road, Oxford.

The wider theoretical issues raised by this correspondence will be the subject of a symposium in next week's TLS. Contributors will include Harold Bloom, Lord Goodman, Ian McEwan, John Sutherland and J. O. Urmson.

Von Moltke

Sir, - In Geoffrey Madan's *Note Books*, recently published, the author records the story (p 90) that Field-Marshal von Moltke once laughed twice in his life, and that one of the times was on hearing of the death of his mother-in-law. George Lyttonel quoted the same story in a letter to Rupert Hart-Davis, including it in a list of "howlers" compiled by Dean Inge, while adding "not a howler". Clearly both writers are drawing on a common source and we would be most grateful to any of your readers who can help us to identify that source.

For, with all respect to Lyttonel, it must be a "howler". The Field-Marshal's mother-in-law, Ernestine Burt (née von Staffeldt), died in 1831. There is no evidence that she knew her father before 1832. Even in that year he is unlikely to have thought of her as a mother-in-law because his future bride, Marie Burt, was only six!

It is true that Marie's father, John Heyliger Burt, married again in 1834. But it is equally unlikely that the Field-Marshal would have laughed on hearing in 1833 (when he was eighty-three) of the death of his stepmother-in-law. For she was also his own sister of whom he was so fond that he had her buried in the family chapel at Kreisau, Silesia, next to the space reserved for himself.

The Field-Marshal was renowned in his family for his silence. But there is no similar tradition about his inability to laugh, although one reason why, at the age of forty-two, he chose as wife a vivacious girl of sixteen was his desire to live a more social life.

John Heyliger Burt, though living in Germany, was an Englishman who owned property in the West Indies and Colton House in Staffordshire. Marie had in consequence English nationality and in her youth wrote English more easily than German. But there is no evidence that she was ever in England.

MICHAEL BALFOUR,
JULIAN FRISBY,
Walne's Cottage, Swan Lane, Burford OX8 4SH.

'Japonisme'

Sir, - Hugh Honour in his review of Siegfried Wichmann's *Japonisme* (March 19) is mistaken in writing that no translation in any European language of the *Painting Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden* was available until 1956. In fact, a French translation by the learned and sensitive writer, Raphael Petrucci, was published posthumously a year after his premature death in 1917. Although half-Italian and half-French in origin, Petrucci made his home in Brussels and he should be remembered for his penetrating study *La Philosophie de la Nature dans l'Art d'Extrême-Orient* (1910). This Chinese work, originally published in 1679-1701, appeared in a

Japanese edition in 1780 and was widely influential among the Nanga artists. Their art was reproduced in colour woodcut books, many of which were to be seen in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century.

BASIL GRAY,
Dawbers House, Long Wittenham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4QQ.

'The Berlin Secession'

Sir, - In his flattering review (March 19), S. S. Prawer regrets the small number of illustrations in my book *The Berlin Secession*. Your readers may like to know that the German edition (*Die Berliner Secession*, Severin and Siedler, Berlin, 1981) contains some 150 black-and-white illustrations, and that a revised second German edition with forty-eight colour plates is in the press. A catalogue with over 200 plates of the exhibition of secessionist works, which Dr Maria-Luise v. Graberg and I organized last summer, is still available from the Neue Berliner Kunstverein, West Berlin.

May I add a comment on S. S. Prawer's criticism of my translation of two verses from *Simplicissimus*? It is precisely because I translated the poem so freely, in the probably vain hope of making it sound like verse, that I included the original German in a footnote.

PETER PARET,
Department of History, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305.

John Ruskin

Sir, - Rachel Trickett in her review of *New Approaches to Ruskin* (March 12) expresses surprise at the importance of Arthur Helps's influence on Ruskin. Sir Arthur Helps (not Phelps as the review has it) was in his official capacity Clerk to the Privy Council from 1860 and later Private Secretary to Queen Victoria. He advised the Queen on literary matters, he arranged her meeting with Dickens and edited the *Journal of our Life in the Highlands* for her. He was also one of the nine literary figures to whom George Eliot asked her publisher to send scenes of *Clarel's Life* when it first appeared in the winter of 1857. Not as "obscure" a figure as Rachel Trickett implies.

ANN THORNTON,
15 Cheniston Gardens, London W8.

Andrew Marvell

Sir, - John Lehmann (*Letters*, March 5) adduces the frontispiece in his copy of the first edition of *Miscellaneous Poems* as evidence that Andrew Marvell wore his hair long. So he does in the frontispiece of my copy of Curjel's edition of *The Works of 1726* - but I had always taken it to be a wig.

JOHN RAYNER,
Garrik Club, London WC2E 9AY.

'transition'

Sir, - May I thank Petr Skrabanek (*Letters*, March 5) for having written the letter I intended to write to you, an earlier correspondent's misstatement concerning *transition* and the surrealists?

Eugene Jolas recognized very early that his movement, its dramas and expulsions, was not standing still, had attracted the most talented young French writers of the time. It would have been tedious indeed on his part, if as editor of a magazine devoted to contemporary experimental writing, he had neglected to give this group, as well as "Work in Progress", full exposure. He regretted that their idiosyncratic action left the individual work untouched, unlike the slightly older Léon-Paul Fargue, whose

neoclassic inventions he appreciated. But Fargue was an absolutely free spirit. He was also one of Jolas's favourite companions.

Except for Philippe Soupault, who was an early friend of Jolas, but also one of the first surrealists to be solemnly excluded from the group (there were others), there was no contact between Jolas and André Breton's movement other than the pages of *transition*.

It would be my guess today that most of the writers who accepted Breton's strict intellectual discipline, however briefly, did not live to regret it but, on the contrary, counted their gains. I myself take pride in the fact that as early as 1927, *transition* introduced these gifted French writers to the English-speaking public.

MARIA JOLAS,
106 bis Rue de Rennes, 75006 Paris.

The Spanish Armada

Sir, - I refer to the review by David Quinn of David Howarth's *The Voyage of the Armada* (December 18, 1981).

Could either of these gentlemen explain why English historians of the Armada, when reporting its eventual fate, take so little interest in the traditions which indicate that several ships eventually reached the Norwegian coast? The Danish-Norwegian government of the time received - and believed - information that some seven or eight Armada vessels had either called or been stranded at various places in Norway, and the local folklore seems to give some support for this. My impression is that English historians are vaguely aware of these tales but perhaps ignore them as too tenuous or unprovable to be worth bothering with. And I agree that in many cases that seems the only possible response. Yet the folk-memories of people in very remote places are not always to be dismissed: only a few years ago, for example, documents were found which confirmed the recollections of two remote Norwegian farming communities of previously unrecorded events in the late seventeenth century.

The really impressive Norwegian tradition is that which relates to the loss of a large Armada ship off the island of Runday (Runde) some 145 miles north of Bergen. The local population have always called this ship the *Invincible Castle*; the *Invincible Armada* had no vessel of that name, but it did contain one "castle" ship: the *Castillo Negro*. What is especially interesting in this connection is that the islanders can be shown to have been using the name *Invincible Castle* - surely a natural conflation of the name of fleet and ship - decades before the publication (1884) of Duro's book *The Invincible Armada*, which is normally credited with having first established this as the generally accepted name outside Spain for King Philip's force.

To a lay eye - do the specialists perhaps have better information? - it does seem as if the *Castillo Negro* could well have ended up in Norwegian waters. She was the largest of the "hulks" (holks, *ircas*) which formed the core of the Spanish fleet as it moved up-Channel, and was last recorded, together with the *Trinidad*, Valencia, picking up survivors from the *Bark of Hamburg* north of Ireland. All three ships had been too battered, clearly, to keep up with the main Spanish fleet; but the *Castillo Negro* was in better condition than the leaking *Trinidad*, which left her to try to reach the Irish coast: in practice what this seems to have meant is that the *Castillo Negro* could stay at sea, but do little more than run with the wind. Her squadron flagship, the *Graen Grifon*, was in the battle sea-area at the same time, and in the same condition, and later hit Fair Isle while being blown helplessly towards Norway. If there is no evidence to the contrary it seems a

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In the hopeful years immediately preceding World War I, three young writers formed a loose but vital artistic alliance. These "Men of 1914" - Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis - and their close friends James Joyce and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska would generate much of the intellectual energy of the twentieth century. They imagined their united flux of brilliant poetry, novels, paintings, and sculpture to take the form of a vortex - an explosive convergence of seminal beauty, order, and force.



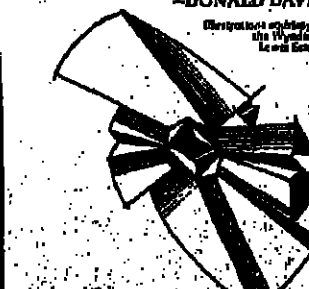
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Céline's letters to his translator

By M. J. Tilby

A remarkable and highly revealing set of letters by the most controversial of all twentieth-century French writers, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, has recently come to light and is being offered for sale at Sotheby's (April 14-15). The letters, which number about eighty, were written to John Marks, the English translator of Céline's first two novels, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (*Journey to the End of the Night*) and *Mort à crédit* (*Death on the Installment Plan*). (John Hugo Edgar Puempein Marks also translated Céline's novel *La Famille de Pascual Duarte* as well as works by René Clair, Sacha Guitry and Jean Malaquais. He was responsible for setting up the BBC Iberian service during the war and from 1943-53 was *Times* correspondent in Madrid.) They remained in the Marks family after the death of John Marks and until now Céline scholars have been unaware of their existence. Some of the early letters contain valuable comments on the way Céline viewed his writing, together with interesting explanations by him of certain phrases which were giving the translator difficulty, but the principal value of the collection consists in the light they throw on the novelist's enigmatic personality. The relationship they depict goes well beyond that of author and translator. The first letter, dated from early in 1933, suggests that at this stage Marks, a Cambridge graduate in his mid-twenties, was scarcely known to Céline personally, if at all. Before long, however, he had become his intimate friend. The letters are frank and often sexually explicit.

Our understanding of Céline is at present so limited that the discovery of virtually any additional evidence would be considered important even if it were far less substantial than the picture contained in these letters to Marks. The importance of such discoveries is further increased by the fact that Céline's life is inextricably interwoven with one of the sorriest periods of recent French history and in particular such questions as French antisemitism and collaboration with the Nazis during the Occupation. All Céline's fictional writings are based heavily on his personal experience and few readers of his work will be able to resist speculating about the extent to which Céline was to be identified with his disconcerting fictional progeny. The same speculations inevitably surround his relationship with his public persona. The greatest desire for the apocalyptic, the author seems to have been only too willing to encourage such a view of himself, especially in later life when he was in the role of scapegoat. Even before this, he was prone to give his interviewers false information about his origins and background.

Since his death in 1961, interest in his work has grown steadily and with it the number of critics and scholars who have become convinced that, with the exception of Proust, he is the greatest French novelist of our time. Yet such a view is often held uneasily and frequently comes under bitter attack. Both admirers and detractors alike are for the most part convinced, however, that the writer and the man must not be kept separate if we are ever fully to understand Céline's personal and historical significance. François Gibault's biography, of which two of the three projected volumes have now appeared, is in this respect extremely valuable. Gibault, the legal adviser to Céline's widow, has had access to material and testimonies that were unavailable to others. But the portrait he presents remains one-sided. The reader is aware that the biographer's enigmatic subject has often eluded him.

The Marks correspondence adds appreciably to our picture of the man. All but three of the letters were written before the war, a high proportion of them being the ballets

were refused in Paris by both the Opéra and the 1937 Exhibition.

On one occasion, doubtless with *Guignol's Band* in mind, Céline writes to Marks for details of the London terminus from which a train departs each night laden with coffins destined for a graveyard in the country. Was this *Gare des morts* Waterloo Bridge? he asks. The macabre spectacle, which Céline claimed to have observed on a previous visit to London, was obviously destined to please the author of *Voyage*, a novel in which death is a constant preoccupation.

The letters contain few comments about other writers but there is one extended dismissal of Malraux, which makes interesting reading alongside the latter's assessment of Céline recorded in a post-war interview with Frédéric J. Grover, published in *Six Entretiens avec André Malraux* (Paris, 1978). Malraux, Céline wrote on 20 September 1934,

me semblait splendidement doué et puis il a manqué de pudeur, d'autocritique et de véritable expérience, il s'est pris au sérieux. A présent il est devenu tout à fait putain. Je ne crois plus qu'il en sortira rien - Des vagues bouillottes orientales prétentieuses et gratuites. C'est grand dommage. Avec Marcel Aymé, Dabit et Morand ce fut à peu près la même histoire.

The comment may, however, be seen in a slightly different light when it is remembered what he said elsewhere about Aymé, Dabit and Morand. It had been Dabit's novel *L'Hôtel du Nord* that had encouraged Céline in his decision to write *Voyage*. *Village Océan*, Dabit's third novel, contained in his view "l'âme française à l'état pur". Marcel Aymé was for him "le plus fin des conteurs français actuels". Paul Morand was singled out by him as being, together with Henri Barbusse, one of his *maîtres*; he was, Céline said, "le premier qui ait jazzé la langue française". What troubled him was that Morand's work had become increasingly difficult to read. All the same, even after the war, in a letter to Joan Paulhan, he was prepared to link the names of Proust and Morand as the two *créateurs* of the period.

The letters also reveal Céline's dislike of both America and Russia ("quel affreux pays"; "une monstrueuse ordure", he said of the latter). On the other hand, they reveal the frequency of his visits to London, a city he had known well during the First World War, his correspondences at this time later becoming the starting point for *Guignol's Band*. These visits were in pursuit of both pleasure and a place in which to work in peace. He stays at the Plaza Hotel, Cranston's Hotel in Bloomsbury, takes furnished rooms in Highgate and even talks of acquiring a house in Chelsea.

A similar project was formulated with respect to Jersey (to escape "l'invasion jeune en France"), though the island features chiefly in the correspondence as the location of Céline's encounter with Scotland Yard. The outlines of the bizarre story of Céline's virtual arrest as a would-be assassin of the newly-crowned George VI are already known. Letters from Céline to the French Consul in Jersey, who played a part in rescuing him from the hands of the police, were published some years ago in the volume of the *Cahiers de l'Histoire* devoted to Céline. Céline's letter to Marks reveals his sense of outrage at being insulted for more than an hour by the detective ("You, lie, sir!") and then all but arrested. His passport was evidently retained for four days and he was kept more or less a prisoner in his hotel. The apology from the Lieutenant-Governor was not good enough. Céline asks Marks to feed the story to any journalists of his acquaintance. ("I'm in a jam, I'm in Scotland Yard.") Research might reveal an account in the English press along the lines of the one that appeared in *France-Solo* (quoted in the Hams volume) though the

name Céline would not have meant much to the average English newspaper reader of the time. The attitude towards Scotland Yard is again apparent, though, in Céline's depiction of Inspector (or Sergeant?) Matthew in *Guignol's Band*.

The letters themselves, like the much smaller number of letters to Evelyn Pollet and Elie Faure which have already been published, are often picturesque objects. Some of them are written on the notepaper of Pigall's Tabac, 22 boulevard de Clichy. Others are on prescription forms from the municipal clinic in Clichy where Céline was employed.

The intimate revelations present a humorous contrast with the primed exhortations on the subject of syphilis and croup. (One of the letters, numbers of the clinic - Péreire 15-71 - contains a hint of the origin of the name Courtil des Péreires, the inventor featured in *Mort à crédit* and modelled on a real-life author, Henry de Graffigny.) The letters are signed in numerous ways: Des-touches, [L.] Destouches, L.F., L.F., L.D. Louis F., L.F.C. Louis, Louis F.C. It is surely not far-fetched to see this proliferation of names as a reflection of the persistently ambiguous relationship between Dr. Destouches and his various literary personae.

But what makes these letters especially precious is the portrait they contain of the friendship between Céline and Marks. The relationship between the author and his translator has hitherto gone almost completely unrecorded. Milton Hindus, who corresponded frequently with Céline while the latter was in Denmark, reveals in his *L-F Céline tel que je l'ai vu* that he had been in touch with Marks before approaching Céline but it is clear from the letters he publishes that by this stage the

friendship between Céline and Marks was almost at an end. In a letter dated June 23, 1947, Céline says that he would be pleased to have Marks' address in Spain, adding: "C'est un excellent ami - il doit avoir l'air un peu assez jolies situation - c'était un hispanisant enragé." And on August 5: "Grâce à vous j'ai retrouvé mon bon Marks à Madrid. Il m'a écrit une très gentille lettre." However, on March 13, 1949, he wrote again to Hindus saying: "Quant à Marks il m'a complètement plaqué, il ne m'écrit plus." The three post-war letters in the Céline-Marks correspondence are indeed all dated 1947.

The pre-war letters to Marks are mostly of a highly affectionate nature. For a spell in 1934 and 1935 Céline even addressed Marks as "mon vieux lapin". The latter was fourteen years younger than Céline and the Frenchman delighted in giving him "paternal" advice, as on the occasion when, doubtless recalling his own brief marriage to Edith Follet, he candidly tells him to marry for money. Even at an early stage, he tells him to address him by any term he likes - *Tu m'as*, *Destouches*, *Ami*, *Salut* - but not *Maitre*. The bond between them is the result of their passion for women. Marks was apparently highly successful with women. Céline comments frequently and usually with great appreciation on Marks's *petites amies*. He admires the long list of names on which the Englishman could draw and envies him his youth and *brío*: "O Espagnol de Londres, don Juan des Brumes", he hails him on one occasion. (Marks was brought up in Spain and was bilingual in English and Spanish.) It was clearly their practice to exchange sexual confidences and the way in which Céline talks of women gives the most intimate of all available pictures of him in this period. He had a remarkable appetite for

fair deduction that the Castillo Negro performed followed the same general course, but on past Fair Isle. The local Norwegian tradition, that she had a very large number of people on board when she struck, also seems borne out by this account, for if she followed the Gran Grifon's track then she four times traversed the length of the Irish west coast, through waters where there were many sailing ships. Some Spanish ships ended with two or three full complements on board: the Bark of Hamburg's people are likely enough to have been joined by other survivors before the Castillo Negro was blown north again. Even the persistent local association of tales of boxes of coin with the wreck on Runday do not necessarily seem absurd; when the *Paymaster-General's* ship caught fire in the Channel she was hustled in among the hulks, and her treasure transferred. One would assume, if there is no evidence to the contrary, that the Castillo Negro - as the largest and therefore safest-looking ship in the squadron - would have got some of it.

On Runday one finds not only tales but also graves. Even in this century local children have still been ordered not to play on a marked grave, which it is said is that of a

group of priests or monks found drowned after the wreck.

The full case cannot be set out here; but it is quite clear that a large ship did hit Runday some time in the late sixteenth century. But is the coincidence of name merely that, and no more? Did this ship actually go down in 1588? Was it actually an Armada ship? Unfortunately the parish records for the period in question are lost. None the less, a marine archaeologist who is an official of the Norwegian Maritime Museum insists was a serious and reliable (though amateur) investigator, maintained a few years ago that he had evidence that church taxes in the area in question were paid partly in Spanish coin in 1599 and that there was also evidence both of rape and murder by the men who got ashore from the lost ship. This investigator was drowned in the course of investigating another wreck shortly afterwards, and so never published his findings, the details of which he was a little wary of revealing before he had assembled his full case. But if his story is true, then it is fairly obvious in what kind of doleful and provincial records he must have found his evidence; and there are plans to repeat his search in the relatively near future. But even if this proves fruitless, there is surely still enough in the traditions of Runday to warrant some attention from English naval historians?

Or so it seems to a lay eye. Others besides myself in these northern latitudes would be glad to know if the professionals see things differently!

KEITH BROWN.
Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1003, Blindern, Oslo 3, Norway.

Translating 'Beowulf'

Sir, - Contrary to Stanley B. Greenfield's assertion (Letters, March 5), Walter Thomas's version of *Beowulf* does include lines 491-709 of the poem. There were, to my knowledge, at least three editions of Thomas's translation, namely, those issued by the Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues Vivantes, Henri Didier, and Renaissance du Livre (abridged). I presume Mr Greenfield refers to the third one.

JACQUES MOURADIAN.
10 rue de la Terrasse, 75017 Paris.

'Disraeli's Grand Tour'

Sir, - Jasper Ridley, in his review (March 12) of Robert Blake's *Disraeli's Grand Tour*, praises Disraeli for not boasting of "his amours" as a traveller, unlike his friend James Clay, and mentions as evidence "a brief and discreet reference to the charms of a lady in Malta". The reference is in Disraeli's last letter from Malta to his brother Ralph before he sailed in Clay's yacht for Corfu, and it reads as follows:

There is a Mrs Pleydell Bouverie here, with a pretty daughter, *cum multis aliis*. I am sorry to say among them a beauty, very dangerous to the peace of your unhappy brother. But no more of that, and in a few weeks I shall be bounding, and perhaps seasick, upon the blue Aegean, and then all will be over. Nothing like an

emetic in these cases.
(*Home Letters*, 1885, p. 69.)

Lord Blake, who quotes from this passage, has remarked that "to amour that could be thus cured was not, one feels, very pastorous". Maybe; but a passion is exactly reflected in the passage, albeit of a literary kind and of a novel for its master in the person of Byron, who had remarked about his amorous hero in *Don Juan*, in similar circumstances and setting, that

No doubt he would have been much more public.
But the sea acted as a strong emetic.

DONALD SULTANA.
University of Edinburgh, Department of English Literature, Edinburgh Tower, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JX.

Language of the Underworld

Sir, - As to the use of the word "pig" for policeman (Letters, February 5, March 5), let me quote from the 1811 *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*:

Pig. A police officer. A Chin street pig; a Bow-street officer. Floor the pig and bolt; knock down the officer and run away.

This dictionary may be little more than a pirate edition of Captain Francis Grose's 1785 *DIV*, which would take the term back over two hundred years from Hotten's *Slang Dictionary* of 1887.

J. D. WILSON.
7 Tower Place, Whitstable, Kent.

Information, please

Aurora Australis, the book produced by Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition, 1907-09: references about the book and the members of the expedition; for a study.
John Millard.
18-86 Broadway Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4P 1T4.

Elliot Bliss, (b 1903; Jamaica), author of *Saraband* (1931) and *Luminous Isle* (1934): fuller details of her career and information about her present address or the date of her death; for an edition of the Letters of Jenn Rhys.
Francis Wyndham.
19 Lonsdale Road, London, W11.

Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-79), photographer: any documents pertinent to her, her family, or her friends; for a critical biography to be published by Random House.
Richard Ehrlich.
345 West 85th Street, Apt 53, New York, New York 10024.

Joyce Cary (1888-1957), novelist: information, especially letters and reminiscences, sought; for an authorized biography.
A. G. Bishop.
Blenheim Cottage, Orchard Lane, Old Boars Hill, Oxford.

"My Sister and I", published 1941 by Harcourt Brace (USA) and Faber and Faber (UK), said to have been written by a twelve-year-old Dutch boy, Dijk van der Eijden: information sought about the actual author and the circumstances of composition and publication.
Paul Fussell.
2 Nassau Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

Mary More (fl. 1670), portrait painter and poet; whereabouts of her portrait of herself and her husband (mentioned by Horace Walpole as in the Pitt-Rivers family) and of her copies of the Holbein portrait of Sir Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex; also any poems, correspondence, etc.; for an edition of her work.
Margaret Rzepl.
Ch4 9AB.

Harold V. V. Temperley (1879-1939), historian and diplomat: personal recollections, letters or other documents sought; for a biography to be written by John D. Fair of Auburn University, Montgomery, Alabama.
H. N. V. Temperley.
Department of Applied Mathematics, University College of Swansea, Singleton Park, Swansea SA2 8PP.

John Blacker, Benjamin Jarvis, and John Thornton, merchants of English birth or descent living in the Hamburg area c1790 on: any biographical information; for a study of their patronage of the Danish architect C. F. Hansen.
Christine Stevenson.
Courtauld Institute of Art, 20 Portman Square, London W1H 0BB.

Bolshevik activities in Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan) during 1920s and 1930s and the threat to British India: personal recollections, diaries, letters, memoirs, etc., especially of Kashgar and Urumchi, and of Colonel P. T. Eitherton, Consul-General at Kashgar; also related material from contemporary Soviet sources or from Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India.
Peter Hopkirk.
c/o John Murray (Publishers), 50 Albemarle Street, London W1.

Ralph David Blumenfeld (1864-1948), American-born journalist and editor of the *London Daily Express* (1902-1930); whereabouts of correspondence, documents and other materials relative to him and the *Express*; also personal reminiscences; for a historical study.
Frank J. Parisi, Jr.
Department of History, The George Washington University, Washington, DC 22052.

E. Powys Mathers (d 1939), poet and translator: assistance sought in tracing literary executors, copy-right-holders or descendants; for a projected edition of his work.
Peter Jay.
Anvil Press Poetry, 69 King George Street, London SE10 8PX.

Lawrence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey

Author, Author

Competition No 64

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than April 23. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to be opened, or failing that, the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries should be addressed to the Editor, *Times Literary Supplement*, P. O. Box 7, New Printing House Square, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EZ. The solution and results will appear on April 30.

1 "Take care of him. He bites!"
2 Me a vast awful bulldog, black and brown.
Completely terrified when near the town:
As calves, perceiving butchers trembling red,
So did my calves the approaching monster feel.

3 But I remember now, that I am always surprised
By the bull-dog in the Burlington Arcade.

By the bull-dog in the Burlington Arcade.

Competition No 60

Winner: Alistair Elliot

Answers:

1 "Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!"

Robert Browning, "Bishop Blougram's Apology"

2 "Ah! How clever Shakespeare! the Countess was saying, 'How gorgeous! How glowing! I once knew a speech from Julia Sees Her!...' perhaps his greatest oeuvre of all. Yes! 'Julia Sees Her' is what I like best of that great great master."

Ronald Firbank, *The Flower Beneath the Foot*, chapter 2

3 The Count said a great many civil things to me upon the occasion and added, very politely, how much he stood obliged to Shakespeare for making me know to him - But, à-propos, said he - he forgot a small punctilio of announcing your name - it puts you under a necessity of doing it yourself.

Lawrence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*

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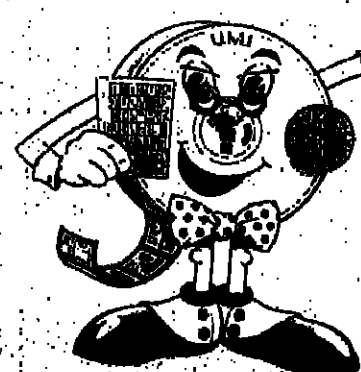
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pleasure. London for him was obviously what Paris and Berlin were for others in the same period. "Comme je regrette Londres et les plaisirs inquiets et l'incomparable Windmill!" On another occasion, he hopes Marks will fix him up with some female company: "Préparez-moi mon vieux un cul bien anglais pour ce séjour que je puisse m'insérer intimement des choses locales. Je veux enlever le printemps!" In another remarkable letter he tells Marks he is bringing a delectable dancer to London (not Karen Jensen, the Danish dancer to whom he dedicated the first edition of *L'Éclair*) and seeks his assistance in finding her a suitable companion who knows the London nightlife:

A ce propos il faudra prévenir P. que j'ai besoin d'un véritable gentleman pour la nuit de cette ravissante personne. Lui-même s'il est libre et le désire. Vous savez que ma vie nocturne n'est pas celle d'un gentleman et on me rendra grand service si on montre les beaux endroits anglais à cette admirable compagnie. Je crois d'ailleurs que le guide ne s'écartera pas du tout. — Toujours un peu maquerelle par mes tendances. J'aime à rendre service.

Women are frankly objects of pleasure for him: "Je ris des choses du cœur. C'est que je suis vieux et coquin." A woman is either maternal or a whore: "Ce n'est jamais une honnête femme au sens où nous l'entendons. La culture et la religion ont créé une femme entièrement théorique." He takes a particular delight in foreign girls — Polish, Danish, American and Chinese. As he says on one occasion, his house is always open to timid sleep ("brebis

peureuses"). While they were not common property there is more than a hint that these women were on occasion passed round an intimate circle of friends. Céline also tells Marks to set his women to work — that's precisely what they want and they will thus be made happy.

Céline's favourite view of himself seems to have been as *maquerelle*: "Un maquerelle veut cinq enfants, il faut choisir. Trente ans, bientôt d'expérience génitale me donne trente mille fois raison" and he exhorts Marks to transform his house in Dorset Square into a brothel. In what is probably the most revealing of all these letters he says: "Quand on est jeune et intellectuel on rougit d'être maquerelle, quand on est vieux et intellectuel on rougit de ne pas l'être. On a compris. Vous n'avez pas encore compris, petit lapin — Ça viendra. . . Le maquerelle est un fils un peu méchant et paresseux, donc adorable. Quand serez-vous donc adorable vieux lapin?" It is a pity we do not have Marks's reply.

The letters to Marks thus provide an intimate picture of Céline in the 1930s, one that is so far unparalleled, even by the letters quoted by Henri Mahé. Not all will approve of his attitude towards women, but his correspondence reveals what is in many respects an attractive personality. A zest for pleasure is expressed boisterously by a showman who enjoys playing a role. Any idea we may have had of Céline's misanthropy is dispelled by the affection he obviously felt for Marks. Other letters in the collection show his concern to promote the interests of such close friends as the painter Gen-Paul and the pianist Lucienne Delforge. For Céline scholars perhaps their greatest interest is the opportunity they

afford of comparing the author's attitude towards women with that of Baudouin in *Voyage*. There are obvious points of contact but there is a light-heartedness here which is lacking in even the more humorous moments of the novel.

Marks was also the editor of the short-lived magazine, *Night and Day*. This British attempt to imitate the *New Yorker* lasted from July to December 1937. The Céline-Marks correspondence shows that Marks kept Céline abreast of the project. An examination of the issue dated December 9 reveals two items of interest. The section "Literary Snacks" contains a short, unsigned but appreciative review (undoubtedly by Marks himself) of *Mea Culpa* and *The Life of Semmelweis*. The pamphlet is described as a "tub-thumping tour de force" and the medical thesis "an impressive important work which anyone interested in these topics (life and death) should read". The inside cover of the same issue contains a number of unsolicited comments on *Night and Day* received from readers. Alongside Anon from Manchester and various other Englishmen designated by their initials we find one L.F.C. from Paris writing: "Le N. and D. nous semble joliment réussi. Nous sommes surtout en extase devant votre splendide dessinateur [Topolski]. Impression impeccable. Travail hors ligne! Et l'humour! Un triomphe, je crois." Nor did Céline forget the magazine. At one point in *Cigognes* he writes: " . . . devant le 'Lyons' le géant de jour et de nuit que ça se passait" and then adds the words "Night and Day". The significance of the English words, which undoubtedly recall the popular song, is clearly not fully grasped without an awareness of Céline's friendship with the young John Marks.



Céline as Rip Van Winkle: a self-portrait drawn during the writer's imprisonment in Denmark in 1945-6. His appearances, apart from hat and chain, are (1 to 1): his favourite cat Bébert, a nostalgic vision of the Moulin de la Galette and a dog called Betty. The drawing was first published in Céline, Cahiers de l'Herne, 1963.

Sceptically mystical

By Graham Dunstan Martin

ROBERT GREER COHN: *Mallarmé: Igitur* 189pp. University of California Press. £17.25. 0 520 04188 7

LEO BERSANI: *The Death of Stéphane Mallarmé* 100pp. Cambridge University Press. £9.95. 0 521 23863 3

Robert Greer Cohn attacks one of the most problematic of Mallarmé's texts, *Igitur*. Cohn does not say this, but I suspect that one of its difficulties is the struggle of the *raisonné* (the title "Therefore") with the problem of consciousness; and that this is why it is a dark, negative though still fascinating work. Cohn had already published an illuminating account of *Igitur* as an appendix to his *Oeuvre de Mallarmé: Un Coup de Dés* (1951), and the present book would be even clearer had it also contained that earlier essay. Nonetheless, it is indispensable, enriching the text and giving us further insights into Cohn's concept of "retroactivity".

This is best illustrated by the critic himself. "Take any classic philosophical proposition, such as 'man is free'. From the viewpoint of ordinary paradox, that proposition is both true and false. But from the viewpoint of retroactivity, the statement that says a proposition is both true and false is itself both true and false." Perhaps, then, Mallarmé's struggle in *Igitur* to imagine paradoxically the joining of consciousness with the All, is itself a paradoxical imagining; a fact which Mallarmé himself knew well.

If every paradox entails its own contradiction, then one should not evade the deliberate contradictions in Mallarmé's own thought. Leo Bersani's intriguing new book provides us with a series of such contradictions. (1) The poet's expressed longing for a language which would "révéler le défaut des langues" (16, establish a language where words no longer have an arbitrary relationship to reality) is seen as contradicting his belief

that "language can produce only fictions". (2) The poet's desire to eliminate all contingency, replacing it with pure subjectivity, results in a sense of the abolition of the self and its replacement by images of the outside world. Similarly and by an opposite irony, the poet's seeking for objectivity results in an original and unique poetic dictation. (3) The poet deprecates "occasional" writing and publishes only as a self-protective gesture that enables him to pursue literature, privately and secretly, elsewhere; yet he takes such care over his "occasional" writings that they acquire an air of supreme value. (4) There is tension in his work between difficulty seen both as the precious secret which must be inaccessible to the profane and as the seriousness of meaning which precludes any one privileged reading. (5) Whereas Mallarmé suggests that the universe exists to be "explained", summarized, concluded in the "Book", his work continually insists on the impossibility of such definitive statements. (6) His great intellectual irony contradicts his equally great sensuality. He is drawn towards the world he seems to reject. (Valéry said that Mallarmé was, of all the poets, the one who knew the one who had seemed most at home in the world. And Mallarmé wrote: "La Nature a lieu. On n'y ajoute pas.")

All this might make Mallarmé seem to be an *écrivain*, in the original sense of that perfectly evasive person who will never commit himself to an attitude. But surely Bersani has put his finger here on an intrinsic feature of Mallarmé's thought. The fact is that Mallarmé's poetry is one of the few that treat the relationship between words and reality with due care. Mallarmé's words are shifting sand, and the universe is seen as the Eastern mystic sees it: "Net net". Cohn crosses his paradoxical *ré* to a veritable go of contradiction; Mallarmé is the one and only sceptical mystic.

As pieces of writing, Cohn's book has an engagingly personal tone as always. Bersani's suffers from a muddiness of language which, nonetheless repays the trouble of reading it. There are some interesting misprints in Cohn: the French text suffers from such errors as the writing of "en" for "et" (p.128). But both books are essential reading for Mallarmé's admirers.

Enlarging the oligarchy

By Owen Dudley Edwards

GEORGE ROSIE (Editor) *Hugh Miller, Outrage and Order: A Biography and Selected Writings* 233pp. Edinburgh: Mainstream. £10.95. 0 906391 17 2

Hugh Miller, stonemason, geologist, journalist, prophet, controversialist, Scotsman and suicide, was a man who believed in using his words with force, so let us begin by giving a hearty welcome to the book and a heavy foot in the rear of the kilt to its publishers for the imbecility of the sub-title. A great service has been done in rescuing Miller's journalism from the past, not only for its principles but for its raw social history as well. Only extracts from his major works have been included here, but we can hope that they will arouse further stages of revival. *First Impressions of England and its People* (1847) particularly merits republication. Unlike the Americans, the English seem to find anatomization by foreigners a social sin, but they do read it, as the popularity in their day of G. J. Renier's *The English: Are They Human?* and A. G. Macdonnell's *England, their England* bear witness. Miller is not Toccaville, but he is himself, which in the context is quite good enough, and this profound and trenchant discovery of England by a Scotsman has powers of inspiration to the student of present-day England as well as to the historian.

As to Hugh Miller, *Outrage and Order: A Biography and Selected Writings* the sub-title, shorn of punctuation as it is on the title-page, may

give the impulse beyond the idea that he is facing George Rosie's biography of Miller accompanied by other of Rosie's own writings. What the book in fact is, is a carefully edited assembly of Miller's representative pieces, prefaced by a valuable biographical essay. Rosie gives a little too much currency to the myth of the Scottish "democratic intellect", but if exaggerated, the myth is on the right side of the divide between truth and fiction. Miller and his Scottish counterparts assumed a far larger audience for their writings than their distant counterparts in London: it was an oligarchy rather than democratic intellect to which they addressed themselves, but that oligarchy was a large one and intended by their activities to be made much larger.

What is clearly intended by Miller's present evangelists is that Scotland should contemplate the real cultural riches of its past instead of confining itself to comforting mythologies, whether perpetrated by the Kailyard or by Hugh Trevor-Roper. Rosie is readable and courtly, but he bares the occasional fang, notably towards that author of a National Trust Pamphlet of 1966 who lamented Miller's "bitterness and lack of moderation which makes much of his writing distasteful to today's reader". At which Rosie snarls "Maybel" (a phrase much beloved in similar contexts by Hugh MacDiarmid) and then some nice demolition work is on the way, prefacing in tone as well as in content Miller's texts on High and Clearances, aristocratic anti-intellectualism, infant chimney-sweeps and the geographical lunacies perpetrated by the Court of Session in its desperate anxiety to find for property interests. On Miller's geological expertise and its relationship to his radicalism, both biography and texts are fasci-

nating, and a great lesson to modern activists in the politics of the environment, who will find what formidable predecessors their movements have. Miller had prejudices aplenty, but as a self-taught examiner of country and people he largely depended on hard personal knowledge. Above all else, his writing is a tirade against ignorance, and an insistence on taking all means for its removal.

The anthology readily concedes that over questions like the extension of the franchise and in labour organization Miller was decidedly conservative. Rosie even terms his politics "a species of eighteenth century Whiggism", which is a bit harsh: they are roughly the same as those of the other voluble nineteenth-century educationist of Scottish antecedents, T. B. Macaulay, and probably quite conscious so. Rosie is rather more happy about the vehemence of Miller's Anti-Catholicism, and only prints the briefest of extracts on this theme with which Miller was slightly obsessed. Apart from the fact that I, and I think most other members of the dejected Church, would have thoroughly enjoyed having more of his brickbats thrown in its direction, it would have helped add a further dimension to his thought. Miller was not merely a rant: like his admirer Carlyle he liked to appeal to intellect and emotion in the same roaring breath. It is fascinating to see him discover in Dublin labour organization in the early 1830s the forerunner of horrors ahead when labour activism had gathered strength. James Connolly could hardly have objected to such a citation.

On the other hand, if Rosie allows us only a little anti-Catholic vinegar, he overdoes it in the other direction by claiming Miller as "a fierce Pres-

byterian who was in favour of Catholic emancipation". Miller's first political journalism was printed long after the final stage of Catholic emancipation had passed Parliament in 1829, and when it came to horse-flogging Miller very definitely preferred his victims alive.

The biographical part is done with balance, indeed on one point with remarkable artistry. After his death, Miller received pious biographical treatment apparently prepared under the supervision of his wife, but a manuscript work exists in the National Library of Scotland in which a nephew injects very sour comment on her version of family history. Rosie elegantly lets her story prevail in his main text and gives the nephew his ugly word in several hilarious footnotes; a most instructive and effective use of sources.

Rosie (and Neal Ascherson, who has written an introduction to the volume) are pastmasters in the presentation of Scottish realities in ways that can hardly fail to interest non-Scottish audiences. The non-Scottish reader of this volume will find himself swept up in the growth of Scottish national self-consciousness within a framework of Unionism, the anti-elitist roots of church disruption, the observation of how Burns was de-radicalized by posterity and Scott posthumously acknowledged as a force for liberation, the concept of patronage as a demeaning influence even in workers' organization, the natural wonder and human tragedy of the Scottish countryside. All in all, *Hugh Miller, Outrage and Order* is an outstanding intellectual contribution for a general audience, and while an index would have improved it, the whole thing reads so agreeably as Rosie's part, and so memorably on Miller's, that the loss is much less serious than in most volumes of such diverse interest.

Pigment in the blood

By Peter Keating

MARY MCKERROW: *A Biography* 158pp. Edinburgh: Canongate. £20. 0 903937 31 X

It was unusual for Thomas Faed to make public statements about his art, but when invited to distribute prizes at the Edinburgh School of Art he took the opportunity to offer some advice that was clearly based on personal experience. Deploping the seductive appeal of Classical models, he is reported to have urged his students to concern themselves only with "things which they had seen with their own eyes", to paint the "gutter children of London rather than Helen of Troy", and to "select their subjects in their own country". Thomas Faed's "own country" was Scotland, and it inspired the subject matter not only of his work, but also (John and James) and of several other members of this remarkable family as well.

As Mary McKerrrow points out in *The Faeds*, Thomas Faed was so closely associated in the public mind with paintings of the Scottish past that it was often assumed he was depicting his own family background. In fact, his father was a comfortably off farmer and engineer from Gatehouse-of-Fleet in Galloway. There is nothing really surprising in that: it is the idealization rather than the reality of those typically mid-Victorian paintings of humble life that seems so obvious today.

More mysterious than the class background of the Faeds is the source of their artistic talent. Mary McKerrrow regards this as an "obvious question", and tends to avoid answering it by accepting a statement from James Faed that the "art" came from the mother's side of the family and the ancestor's from the father's. Even so, it is strange: relatively little is known of the mother, and the talent was so extensive and appar-

ent, and a great lesson to modern activists in the politics of the environment, who will find what formidable predecessors their movements have. Miller had prejudices aplenty, but as a self-taught examiner of country and people he largely depended on hard personal knowledge. Above all else, his writing is a tirade against ignorance, and an insistence on taking all means for its removal.

They received little encouragement from their father: indeed, he actively opposed his eldest son John's early interest in art. John simply improvised paints and brushes from material around him and sought support, and patronage, from other local families. At the age of nine, Mary McKerrrow claims, he was painting "serious miniatures", and three years later he was "visiting the villages and towns of Galloway . . . painting the aristocracy and nobles". By the time he moved to the art school at Edinburgh his reputation as an artist was already established and he could encourage his brothers to follow his example.

They did so with the same kind of natural ease, though only after their father's death in 1843. Once parental disapproval was out of the way, Thomas, who had been apprenticed to a draper against his wishes, immediately joined John in Edinburgh. James held back for a while. He had inherited his father's engineering skills and seemed set to take over the family business, but soon he also moved to Edinburgh, starting as an assistant to his brothers and then quickly developing an experimental interest in mechanical engraving. Critical and financial success followed effortlessly and all three brothers were, inevitably, drawn to London for varying periods of time.

Mary McKerrrow insists that her main task is biographical: she is concerned primarily with the Faeds, and she neglects the way they have suffered in the present century, and this she certainly achieves. But, by

considering the Faeds collectively she demonstrates the range and variety of their work and therefore also helps rescue them, critically, from the limited artistic stereotypes that have too often been used to characterize them. The large-scale narrative paintings on Scottish themes for which they are best remembered — John Faed's "The Wapenschaw" and Thomas Faed's "The Last of the Clan" — are discussed sympathetically; as also are Thomas Faed's once famous studies of the poor like "A Lowland Lassie" and "The Mitherless Bairn". But the defensive tone sometimes adopted by Mary McKerrrow in discussing these paintings is understandable, perhaps even desirable. They still carry with them too

much an air of belonging to a very particular place and time; their sentiment and narrative content remain obtrusive.

Yet there is much else to admire. The portraits by all three brothers (and by Susan Faed as well) are consistently impressive, while John Faed especially is represented here, in addition to the familiar genre paintings, by his superb illustrations of Robert Burns's poems; an obviously Vermeer-inspired portrait "The Young Duchess"; a dreamy, romantic allegory; and, most notably, "Catherine Seaton and Roland Graeme" which succeeds in capturing a depth of personality rare in Victorian paintings of women.

MacDonalidicide

By James Hunter

MAGNUS LINKLATER: *Massacre: The Story of Glencoe* Photographs by Anthony Gascoigne 159pp. Collins. £7.95. 0 00 435669 1

By twentieth-century standards it was a very modest piece of butchery: thirty-eight dead; a few score survivors fleeing for their lives into the wintry hills. But 200 years after its occurrence the Massacre of Glencoe still provokes interest and argument, not least because of the brutal disregard of the traditional rites of Highland hospitality on the part of those soldiers who rose in the night and murdered their hosts, men, women and children. The Massacre of Glencoe is no isolated incident. Beyond the killing of the Glencoe MacDonalds lay Culloden, the Highland Clearances and the extinction of the Gaelic way of life.

The main merit of Magnus Linklater's retelling of the Glencoe tale, apart from its readability, is the sure-footed way in which the author sets the Glencoe tragedy in the political

context of the time. This was no obscure tribal feud, though clan rivalries imbued upon it, particularly the long-running hostility between Campbell and MacDonald. The massacre, as Linklater makes clear, was a coolly reasoned act of state; a carefully considered gesture by Scottish Ministers seeking to protect William of Orange and the Protestant Succession from Papist and Jacobite plots and rebellions which invariably involved disaffected Highland clansfolk such as those who inhabited Glencoe. Highlanders killing Highlanders was nothing new. But in that more innocent age there was something genuinely shocking in the notion that a supposedly Christian government might order the "extirpation" of an entire community. That was what made the happenings at Glencoe a *cause célèbre* then and later; that and the morbid romanticism which soon invested Glencoe itself with the air of a place made for dark deeds.

Magnus Linklater is good on Glencoe, its mountains, mist and moor. So is Anthony Gascoigne who took the photographs responsible for transforming this joint production into that rare achievement, a picture book in which the illustrations add to the written word beside them.

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The end of the auld sang

By James Campbell

EDWIN MUIR:
Uncollected Scottish Criticism
Edited and introduced by Andrew Noble
269pp. Vision/Barnes and Noble
£14.95
0 85478 324 5

After Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir is the most important figure in twentieth-century Scottish literature. Indeed, he is almost as valuable as MacDiarmid, since his scepticism was equal to the latter's tendency to inflate the achievements and prospects of the Scottish Renaissance. The two writers began as allies in the 1920s, but their quarrel over the question of whether to write in English or Gaelic, MacDiarmid's synthetic dialect in which he had written two books of fine lyrics, soon developed into savage attacks on Muir by MacDiarmid, attacks which Muir's rationalism allowed him to accept calmly: MacDiarmid may have been an apparition of genius, but he was also an intolerable fanatic.

Muir occasionally claimed that his Orcadian birth disqualified him from being called a Scot. It was his way of trying to evade the disfigurements of Scottish history, which he felt painfully. Writing in *Scottish Journey* (1935) he described "A country which is becoming lost to history, gradually emptied of its population, its spirit, its wealth, art, intellect and innate character." This sorry state of affairs endangered more than just his career as a writer; his inner life was at stake; indeed the two were closely related. In a sense, all Muir's work – and certainly his poetry, which was devoted to restoring the "unified" vision of things which he had experienced as a child in Orkney, in which thought, feeling and imagination are integrated and find expression. He believed that modern man can have little scope for such comprehensive vision as the less so in Scotland, a country "becoming lost to history".

In addition to his many books, Muir wrote hundreds of reviews and articles, and it is examples of these which Andrew Noble has chosen to make up his selection of Muir's Scottish criticism, to which he has added a long informative introduction. The arrangement of the pieces goes by theme rather than chronology; the problem with this is that Muir often repeated himself – for example, there are five pieces on Burns and the same opinions crop up in several of them. There are a few mistakes, such as the dating of MacDiarmid's poem *To Circumjack Cenerinus* in 1923 instead of 1930. Some footnotes to the essays would have been useful, for example one to explain Muir's reference to Kafka as an Austrian writer. Furthermore, given that there are so many pieces by Muir (including some on Scottish subjects) other than those printed here, a list would have been helpful to the ones wishing to pursue an interest in this under-read critic.

For Muir was a critic of the highest quality. That he is rarely given credit for his brilliance is due as much to careless neglect as it is to the lack of cohesion in his oeuvre, a lack which is all the more surprising in a writer preoccupied with unity. In addition to his poetry, he wrote three novels (one of which has been reissued, and is reviewed on this page), several collections of essays, a study of the novel, a biography of Knox, an autobiography, and a record of his travels, and other books such as *Scottish Journey*, which is a combination of history, travel, criticism and autobiography, and allows his great intelligence a wide range.

The pieces brought together here cannot be said to constitute a coherent critique of Scottish literature, some are less than two pages long, but they are none the less worth collecting, since they bear the stamp of Muir's lucidity, and all are

part of his effort to strip Scottish literature of its historical corruptions and its chauvinistic pretensions and to judge it in relation to a proper standard. The best pieces are the longer ones: an assessment of George Douglas Brown, author of *The House with the Green Shutters*, which Muir regarded as being superior to Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*; a fascinating comparison of Bolshevik and Calvinist modes of totalitarianism; the essay, "A Note on the Ballads", perhaps the best introduction there is; fine essays on Burns, Scott and Stevenson and a group of five terse pieces on aspects of the state of modern Scotland.

Muir's difficulties with Scottish literature stem from the split which must have been forming in the Scottish mind long before the Union of the Parliaments made it visible in 1707. The Union meant that educated Scots, who came from a distinct cultural tradition quite separate from the English one, were suddenly expected to show allegiance to English government and English models of civilization. (Many of course leapt at the chance; hence the appearance in the eighteenth century of little books designed to help remove "Scotticisms" from the vocabulary.) It deprived Scotland of a separate government, thus disabling Scottish affairs by removing the machinery which creates history and helps shape culture. The schism this produced survived into Muir's time, and continues to afflict Scottish culture today.

The basic difference between Muir and MacDiarmid was that one believed the fractures could be healed while the other did not. It was the

language problem which provided the bone of contention. The question is the same now as it was then: should Scottish writers write in the language they speak, in which they are educated and, after all, governed; or ought they to react against these conditions and write instead in Scots, which came naturally to Burns and may sound natural to the Scottish ear, but which is nowadays seldom spoken? For MacDiarmid, Lallans was the only hope for a native Scottish literature, whereas Muir regarded its use as an anachronism: the "auld sang" was reaching an end. "Reduced to its simplest terms", he wrote in *Scott and Scotland* (1936), "this linguistic division means that Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another; that their emotions run to the Scottish tongue with all its associations of Scottish sentiment, and their minds to a standard English which for them is almost bare of associations other than those of the classroom." When this separation is complete, he went on, "emotion becomes irresponsible and thought arid".

Muir's difficulties with the three great writers which Scotland has produced since the Union – Burns, Scott and Stevenson (four if one includes MacDiarmid, although the difficulties Muir experienced with him are somewhat different) – all at some point involve the language question and each writer's attempts to settle it. Scott suffered most because his powers were greatest and his need to be both an English and a Scottish writer made him prone to the vice of gentility. It is the characters from the lower orders who speak Scots in his novels; Muir regarded this Scots as

being unsurpassed, but Scott debased his characters, their tongue, and finally their own achievement, by relegating them – "the only true children of his genius" – to a subordinate place in his novels. In his poetry he sacrificed the close fitting of words to things, which he must have known from his devotion to Scottish ballads, to cheap melodrama. At this point Muir's view of Scott coincides with his view of Stevenson. Until his last novel (he died while writing it), Stevenson's work paralleling his own bid for him from steering his talent away from romances in which words must be unsheathed every few pages. It was the effect of his incomplete reaction to the society he emerged from: a strictly religious one, in which secular literature was tolerated only as amusement. The result was that Stevenson's imagination was reduced to fancy, and his prose had to be falsely decorated to suit it. There is some dubious speculation about the theme of disinheritance in Stevenson's work paralleling his own "lost heritage of health", but the essay "Robert Louis Stevenson" answers those who wonder why he is not classed with the great novelists of the last century.

The essays on Burns are valuable chiefly for showing it is the poet's ordinariness which has made him part of the fabric of national life in a way that the English bard could never be. Of course, this popularity could only be a mixed blessing. In "Burns and Holy Willie", an excellent piece which reports on the unveiling by Ramsay MacDonald of a statue of the ploughman-poet, Muir demonstrates how the subversive Burns has been misappropriated by a

bourgeois audience which is willing to approve his morality, and share his accent, only on Burns Night.

Not surprisingly, Muir likes Burns best, and regards him as safest from most closely to the ballads. The ballads represent Muir's ideal in Scottish literature: a clear vision, in which the word is close to the thing, rendered with passion. Besides the ballad tradition, only poets of the medieval period were completely free from the major corrupting influences of Scottish history: the Reformation, the Union and the Industrial Revolution, whose various expressions were to make the continuation of an organic literary tradition in Scotland impossible.

Although Muir's value as a critic lies in his disinterestedness, his search for a relation between the brief story of man and the fable of mankind occasionally led him into romantic or irresponsible fantasies, such as that at the close of *Scottish Journey* in which, after a beautiful meditation on Scottish history, he allows himself to imagine a Scotland freed from the twin curses of depression and capitalism by an application of Major Douglas's theories of social credit. He was wrong in this, and his urge to escape the Scottish orphanage occasionally led him to other desperate opinions, such as that Scotland would one day soon be subsumed by England. But more than most he can be depended on for his toughness of mind. In a Scotland where the problems facing writers have changed little since the 1930s, when Muir wrote much of this criticism, that is what is needed most.

mother, father and two brothers died; and, ultimately, a repossession of Paradise. When the impulse that prompted his poetry flagged he turned out more pedestrian writing including three novels: the neurotically intense *The Majorities* (1927), the historical *The Three Brothers* (1931) and the autobiographical *Poor Tom* (1932).

Willis Muir, the poet's wife, revealed in *Belonging* (1968) that Muir wanted to preserve a considerable distance between his fiction and his poetry. His poems were to be glowing recreations of his childhood vision whereas the novels were to be objective accounts of imaginative experience. Muir, Willis recalled, wrote *Poor Tom* as a purely contemporary study of life in Glasgow, again using his own family experi-

ences, but again in this book, which contained much that was finely imagined and moving, he failed to attract a public. Now it is being reissued in Paul Harris's impressive Scottish Fiction Reprint Library, and comes complete with an informative introduction by Muir's biographer P. H. Butter who feels that "Muir's novels were not for novel-writing. Nevertheless his intelligence, sensitivity and vision make this book far more interesting and moving than most novels."

The novel retains its fascination as a record of Muir's experience of Glasgow and an example of the way in which he attempted to fit the autobiographical facts to a peculiarly Scottish form of fiction. Robert Louis Stevenson and George Douglas Brown are the two major influences on the book. By dividing the narrative interest between two contrasted brothers Muir offers a crude version of the psychological duality so expertly explored by Stevenson: Tom Manson drinks while Mansie Manson thinks, Tom acts while Mansie resists. Tom longs for freedom while Mansie accepts the institutional aspect of Christianity and Socialism. Tom is an engineer while Mansie is an office worker. The theme of sibling rivalry has a sexual dimension, and the book opens on a tense situation as Tom watches Mansie walking out with his girl Helen. "By God, I'll get even with him!" he thought, but no expedient came to his mind, and his anger took another leap upwards.

Muir's secondary stylistic source persuades him to set in industrial Glasgow the narrow moral world that George Douglas Brown examined in *The House with the Green Shutters* (1903). Muir goes through the whole repertoire of effects that the self-consciously artistic Scottish novel: alcoholic escapism, domestic melodrama, the sense of being haunted by a defeatist past, the Gothic presence of an oppressive fate. Muir's own contribution to this predominantly realistic mode is to give symbolic significance to the events he describes. There is an obvious biblical symbolism in the theme of sibling rivalry, and also in Tom's predicament, for it had had the ability to crystallize his vague feelings of betrayal objected with Glasgow he

might have said that he was betrayed by a kiss. When the first part of the novel ends with Tom's moral collapse into "drift and water in the street" this drunken fall from a tramcar is supposed to represent the fall of man. In Muir's prose, as in his poetry, Eden is only an image away and Tom, we have been told, remained outside his "private Eden".

Tom's long decline is, likewise, meant to represent the atrophy of the individual in an industrial environment. As Tom is reduced to an onlooker and Mansie shifts to a central position, Muir's difficulty is in making the movement of Mansie's mind a genuine focus of interest. In the beginning Mansie is unsympathetic. When a local girl provides his sexual initiation, his priggish nature rises to the surface and he felt as though he had been transported among the working classes, who sat about collarless and in their shirt-sleeves, and washed themselves down to the waist at the kitchen sink while the rest of the family sat at the table eating." Later he accepts his social inferiors as moral equals and through a "revelation" vouchsafed him on May Day, undergoes a conversion to Socialism. Having abandoned action in the interests of a world he did not, at the time, actually possess. Or so the prose suggests. This is a typical example of the way he moves unconsciously from assertion to abstraction: "A sick man's infirmity may confine him to a pair of small rooms, but for the spatial freedom that he is denied, Time, Time in which he can do nothing at all if he chooses, richly recompenses him, translating itself into a new and more satisfying, because more amenable, dimension of space."

Poor Tom is an incidentally rewarding novel rather than an achieved work of art. For the student of Muir it is obligatory reading, for the general reader it is best regarded as a minor work by a major writer. It was Muir's volitional performance as a novelist, and his prose was thereafter directed towards criticism, autobiography and translation. Clearly he knew what he suited his own talents as a writer of prose.

* The new edition of *Poor Tom* will be published on April 14.

John Holloway

Improvements before the improvers

By T. C. Smout

ROBERT A. DODGSHON:
Land and Society in Early Scotland
345pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £22.50.
0 19 822660 8

MARGARET H. B. SANDERSON:
Scottish Rural Society in the 16th Century
286pp. Edinburgh: John Donald. £15.
0 85976 027 8

The study of Scottish agrarian history has long attracted good scholars, yet the subject remains in a curiously unsatisfying state. Intellectually, awaiting the major interpretative strokes that will give it form. For the entire period from 1780 to 1900 and beyond – traditionally the great days of Scottish farming – it cries out for proper analysis, backed by quantification. For the period before 1780 – and certainly before 1700 – the extent and depth of study has depended mainly on a few articles, and a single book by Ian Whyte, *Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, though Alexander Fenton's *Scottish Country Life and Francis Shaw's The Northern and Western Islands of Scotland* are also useful contributions. Whyte's book, together with *Land and Society in Early Scotland* and *Scottish Rural Society in the 16th Century*, now make up the major corpus of writing on the Scottish economy in earlier centuries.

The old view was that Scottish farming was virtually a stagnant pond until it was cleared out by vigorous post-Union landowners. This was already under fire at the time when Whyte finally and conclusively demolished it. But what was to replace it? We were to see Scottish history here as a reflection of English history, where the "Agricultural Revolution" and the enclosure movement of the eighteenth century have been de-throned to a relatively minor episode in a long-running story of constant change and response to the market, to industry and to demography that accelerated rather than clearly in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries than at other times? Whyte has both urged his readers to regard Scottish husbandry before the Union as something adaptable, vital and already on the move, and yet warned them not to be lulled by a Kerridge-type agricultural revolution had already taken place in the north. There is nothing necessarily self-contradictory in this, of course. He clearly showed that many things once regarded as characteristic of eighteenth-century improvers – like liming, giving extended leases, emparking, and consolidating holdings – had a significantly older history. But two problems remained unresolved. First, what were the movements in yield achieved by these changes? Whyte produced a few figures, but the data have not yet yielded up the treasures promised by Overly and others for England. Second, how far were his changes illusory rather than real, produced by an improvement in the land, and a concentration on study in a particular period, rather than by a real concentration of changes in husbandry in the seventeenth century? Would detailed study of earlier periods show that many of these practices had a still older history in Scotland?

Neither of these books properly attempts to answer the first of these problems: both imply at least partial answers to the second. And they cannot fail to be read with profit by those with a serious interest in the very problem of how agrarian society in Britain as a whole has developed, for the contrast between the Scottish and those parts of England, Wales and Ireland that have been studied in depth must be instructive. Robert Dodgshon is ambitious and takes the grand sweep, from his opening observation that men have been in Britain for over 200,000 years, but in Scotland for only 7,000. In his closing warning that the Highlands are comprehensible only in the light of developments that took place in the century before

1780, *Land and Society in Early Scotland* is both a masterly survey of the scattered printed work of earlier scholars (nineteenth-century and modern) and an original synthesis peppered with sharp observations of his own. Its scope makes it a difficult book to review – those who feel at home down on the seventeenth-century farm are not usually well qualified to criticize Dodgshon's views on the Bronze Age, or adjudicate on the intricacies of medieval land measurement.

Nevertheless, there are certain themes that run like sinews through the book. One is the sense of continuity of institutional forms over long periods and between cultural watersheds. For instance, Dodgshon follows Barrow and others in equating shire and tithing to a label for the multiple estate, to show how the latter came to be itself a Celtic survival apparently ubiquitous in Scotland and possibly extending backwards into the Iron Age – "a crucial thread of continuity from the prehistoric period through into the historic" and a functional means of control and exploitation that "enabled the degree to influence the many". If there is here a hint of historical materialism, the second sinew is the sense of the abiding harmony of the institutions of this early rural economy with the world about it. It was only primitive in the sense that its methods were unsophisticated and directed mainly to subsistence, not that they were stupid or ill-judged. The township of multiple tenants exploiting arable, muir, moss, mill and shieling, and keyed in to the feudal barony and baron court, was a subtle organism maximizing man's ability to survive and reproduce himself in a harsh environment. Incidentally, the degree to which the farmstead was a genuine co-operative institution on the arable is still unresolved, by Dodgshon, by Sanderson and by Whyte. There is much evidence for town co-operation over herding and stocking, but surprisingly little evidence for it in respect to ploughing, sowing and reaping: runrig, and tures like half an oxgang, seem to imply co-operation in arable farming, but how and for how long it was so organized is very unclear.

A third theme in *Land and Society in Early Scotland* is the insistence that continuity and harmony are compatible with a dynamic of change: the township does not just emerge in the closing centuries of prehistory and then survive unaltered until the improvers sweep it away – it adapts, and the basic spur to adaptation seems to be demographic pressure. The expansion of the number of new settlements is one sign of this – the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were one period of unquestionable colonizing activity, and there was another "late burst of settlement formation" in the late fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The splitting of existing settlements – giving the two new settlements names such as Easter and Wester, or Nether and Over – is another, more characteristic of the second period than of the first: this often involved the decentralization of an existing township, which might be left with a church and little else so that it could even be mistaken for a late medieval "deserted village" and taken for an indication of retracting, not expanding, cultivation.

The other and most significant change proposed by Dodgshon is the innovation of outfield, not – as most earlier commentators had presumed – a timeless feature of pre-improving cultivation, but a new practice of the fifteenth century enabling land to be more effectively taken in from the waste. In traditional historiography, the outfield has been described as characteristic peasant bad practice, little more than an area of shifting cultivation on underfertilized land. Dodgshon argues that it was always associated with folding stock on defined areas of temporary enclosure, and should be seen as more efficient use of scarce peasant or marginal land. If he is right (and his evidence appears persuasive), then the increased ability of the land and to support a larger population in the

sixteenth century becomes apparent – as, too, perhaps, its increased susceptibility to famine, since such marginal land was presumably more vulnerable to failure in years of bad weather than was the remainder.

The last two chapters of *Land and Society in Early Scotland* are devoted to the period 1650–1760, the age immediately before basic changes altered the landscape and the intellectual economy out of recognition. This period is an immediate implicit comparison with Whyte's work, which can now be assessed more clearly in the longer perspective. Dodgshon can find no evidence for a dramatic Kerridge-type revolution in Scotland before the eighteenth century, but he refers to "widespread change in the nature of farming enterprise and in landholding, the roots of which lay in the seventeenth century", but which only produced fundamental alterations in economic structure late in the eighteenth century. These post-1650 changes appear to have included, in those places most in touch with a growing external market for grain and meat, an increase in the number of single-tenant farms, though he is careful to observe that there had "never been a time when the abiding harmony of the institutions of this early rural economy with the world about it, was so closely in touch with the market, the number of multiple tenants was growing, especially in the Highlands where the demon of congestion was already evident early in the eighteenth century."

He suggests that an agrarian bifurcation was taking place, with an efficient market sector of single tenants (typified by the stock farms of the Borders) increasingly relying on external sales, and a subsistence sector with multiple tenancies providing labour for pursuits like spinning, knitting and fishing. Theoretically this is persuasive: exactly what were the concrete realities of these two sectors on the ground remains to be explored more fully.

As for changes in technique, Dodgshon fails to discover anything for this later period as obviously important as the invention of outfield which he postulates for the fifteenth century. The use of lime may have been pushed back into the sixteenth century, enclosure before the Union was still little more than an sparking round the great house. Of more value probably was the introduction in some places, of four and five-course rotations using fallow and one legume crop, to replace the traditional oats-oats-bear of the infield. He says "this was probably a major innovation of the period 1750–1760" which must surely be a misprint for "1650–1760"; even so, the use of legume and four-course rotations can be found earlier, and the exact impact of this change is hard to judge, without more yield figures.

Those who read this book from an informed background of English agricultural history will probably find it hard to escape the feeling that the eighteenth-century Scottish improver and English traveller were right to believe that Scottish agriculture was extraordinarily backward, in the sense that the general absence of "up-and-down-husbandry", sown grasses, roots, clover or extensive enclosure until after 1760 did mean that it was under-performing in relation to its potential and the known technology of the age. On the other hand, the reason for this is easy to see. If the market for the products of the cattle trade in the eighteenth century, the peasant's strategy was to make use of limited changes and to survive at subsistence level as best he could – well enough, from his point of view.

Margaret Sanderson's *Scottish Rural Society in the 16th Century* is almost equally fascinating, but quite different: instead of the grand sweep, the single century; instead of the omnivorous curiosity, a concentration on problems of tenure – though not, it must be said, to the exclusion of the germane details of husbandry, perhaps, one should) those of im-

provements. Much of this corroborates Dodgshon, though it is strange and disappointing that not a word of what he Whyte, Fenton or Shaw has written appears in her bibliography. She consolidates the regular nature of the consolidation of holdings even in her period, the early uses of lime, peas and beans (though they are not in the index) and the intelligent nature of the peasants' strategy in farmstead and barony when faced with the problem of extracting a living from a harsh land. Her remarks on leases are worth pondering: between the mid-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth century the commonest leases (at least on tithing lands) were for life or for a number of years – and they were numerous. If Whyte found the granting of long leases to be one of the most significant signs of change in the seventeenth century, maybe the period of short leases holding at will was a comparatively brief aberration.

The bomb Dr Sanderson wishes to throw into Scottish sixteenth-century history, however, concerns not this but the fate of the so-called "kindly tenants", and the nature of the disposal of church lands under the feudal system. The traditional view is that the kindly tenants of the fifteenth century, who had held their land for generations without formally establishing legal rights of heritable tenure, were severely dealt with the kirk came to sell off its patrimony for a fixed quit-rent (feuduty), losing security and perhaps the land itself to big secular landowners who moved in to buy the fees. Not so, she contends. The renters who enjoyed kindly tenure were closely analogous to English copyholders, and generally emerged from the feuing movement as independent owner-occupiers. About half the fears which can be traced were small men; most of the small men were already occupying the land when it was feued: it was continuity and greater security, not fracture and dispossession, that was the order of the day.

Sanderson deploys in her task an immense learning, and much research. For instance, she is able to establish beyond a shadow of doubt that very large numbers of renters did become feuars of their own lands, which is an extremely significant finding. But how far can the argument be pushed? Can it be said not only that most known feuars were renters, but also that most land passed into the hands of renters? There is a very large difference, especially bearing in mind that a few places passed into the hands of large numbers of very small tenants. A mere seven settlements (Tayport, Oronsaye, Newstead, Newton, Lessenden, Eyemouth and Coldingham) were feued to about 230 small tenants, who thereby accounted for about a fifth of all known charters in Scotland granted to persons below the rank of laird. On the other hand, those above that line were often given extensive areas of land: "charter to noblemen often contained a large number of territories, including whole baronies". The logic of this forces one to the conclusion (not, however, drawn by Sanderson), that much less than half the land went to the occupiers. But how much less?

The answer is not easy to find, but Table 3, headed "amounts of land granted to occupants", seems to be relevant: it contains a column called "percentage of grants to occupants", and the grants are defined as "units of land, great and small, mentioned in the body of the charters". Calculation from that column suggests that in the thirty-one areas the mean percentage of grants to occupants was 43.5 per cent. Now, 87 per cent of the occupants were "resident occupants" and 60 per cent of the residents known to have been below the rank of laird. If typical renters, it would seem, therefore, that renters probably got on these estates about 23 per cent of the "units of land", leaving 77 per cent for the rest of society: if one disregards (as perhaps one should) those of im-

known status, then it looks as if the renters might have got 31 per cent and the rest of society 49 per cent.

This must be a rough calculation and the author could undoubtedly make a better one from the original data. If it is true that roughly three-quarters, or two-thirds, of the land surface was sold to those other than the working tenants, then it leaves intact Sanderson's main point, that the feuing movement to become portions and bonnet lairds, independent smallholders with security, especially (but certainly not exclusively) in the west, in Fife and in patches of the Eastern Borders. But for every renter who obtained this benefit there were two – or three – who did not. That would also leave intact a main point of the other historiography, that the breakup of the kirk lands did indeed involve a massive transfer of power over the lands to lairds, nobles and others, who might well not hesitate to use the opportunity to threaten the security of the tenantry. Plenty of contemporary thought this was happening. Dr Sanderson is not too keen on the use of literary evidence, but Dr Dodgshon surveys the same period from the satirical tract of Sir David Lindsay and others "instructive source" that "depict the Scottish peasant as racked and impoverished by both nobility and burgher alike". That still seems to be fair.

These two books between them solve many problems, and raise a good few more. They represent together a great step forward in our understanding of how Scottish rural society worked before the improvers, and it is much to be hoped that others will take up the research challenges that have been so vigorously made here by both authors.

The Tate Gallery in association with Edinburgh University Press has published *Thomas and George the Fourth in Edinburgh, 1722* by George Blair (270pp. £15. 0 85224 432 0), which complements the exhibition and reproduces in facsimile the contents of J. M. W. Turner's two pencil sketches of drawings made at the state visit of the recently crowned king, Sir Walter Scott planned the ceremonies and costumes and adorned the Scottish capital: "A tartan fit had come upon the city," wrote Allan Cunningham. Turner recovered in the events in one sketchbook and in the other planned a series of paintings of the "Royal Progress", although never executed, the sketches for them reveal much about Turner's art and working methods.

The National Library of Scotland has commissioned and acquired an example of the work of the contemporary craft bookbinder Arthur W. Currie, now Senior Lecturer in the Department of Print Media, Publishing and Communication at Napier College of Commerce and Technology, Edinburgh, in a copy of Paul Needham's *Twelve Centuries of Bookbinding 400–1600*, bound in morocco and tooled in geometrical designs inspired by Coptic work illustrated in the book. The binding is on display in the National Library Exhibition Room until April 23.

SPRING BOOK AWARDS

The Scottish Arts Council has awarded £800 to the author(s) of each of the following books:

- Angus Calder
- Parvathy Ramani
- Jonathan Cape
- Francis Russell Hart & J. B. Pick
- Neil M. Gunn: A Highland Life
- John MacGill
- Christina Laver
- Enquiries of God
- Chaito & Winick
- Michael Lynch
- Edinburgh and the Reformation
- John Donald
- Allan Macle
- The Death of Man
- Bodley Head
- Christine Mac
- A Childhood in Scotland
- John Murray
- Ron Morris
- For All I Know
- Abertay Press

Scottish Arts Council

The Hanoverian side

By Rosalind Mitchison

W. A. SPECK:
The Duke of Cumberland and the Suppression of the '45
230pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £12.50.
0 631 10501 8

This is establishment history. In the *Oxford English Dictionary* one meaning offered for "establishment" is "a settled government or constitution" and such an institution is established only for so long as it remains "settled". Unsettling actions are to be seen as outrageous attacks on an approved *status quo*. By 1745 many could hold that the "revolutionary" settlement of 1689 and its continuation in the equally revolutionary Hanoverian succession had become established in public opinion and support as well as in fact. Any alternative was thus unthinkable. W. A. Speck, in his lively but one-sided, *The Duke of Cumberland and the Suppression of the '45* succumbs to this view. In the campaign between two royal princelings, the 25-year-old Stewart heir, Prince Charles Edward, and the younger son of the Hanoverian monarch, the 24-year-old William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, the word "royal" is carefully reserved for the Hanoverian army. Yet the Hanoverian title was the creation of Parliament, and the government of the day recognized Charles Edward as a prince. Some 30 years later his brother and heir was to receive a pension from the British government. Because Professor Speck has decided that "fact" is to be treated as "right" he goes no further than did William Augustus in understanding the basis and force of Jacobitism. There have been too many books on the '45 seen exclusively from the Jacobite side, but it does not truly redress the balance to answer these with one seen only from the Hanoverian side.

Establishment history is, by definition, a success story and success stories lack the pathos and tragic dimension of heroic failure. In this story the tragedy pertains not to the unheroic failure of the Stewart youth, a conventional and not very intelligent young man who still possessed residual charm, but to the clan society which was finally broken up after the rising.

It is high time that Cumberland's personal achievement should be applauded. He was brought back from waging war on the continent, to carry through this campaign with energy and efficiency. He used his troops well, saw to their training and equipment, spoke to them with the right note of encouragement and cheer, rose early, as often as not at 4 am, and got through his business briskly. He infused his men with his own confidence, so that, on his birthday, the night before the battle, he could assure them "we have one march more" and be believed. He had chased the Highland army through England, and nearly caught it. When called upon later to pursue it into the Scottish Highlands he had the wisdom not to venture into the narrow valleys that penetrate the massif but to head up the coast. Meanwhile the Highlanders' march to Derby had produced unprecedented displays of loyalty to the regime. Loyal Associations sprang up all over England, and large sums were subscribed. Most of the money was for local defence, but some part of it went "comforts", that is basic clothing, for the army. Even that bizarre grooving of illegal capitalists, the smugglers of Sussex, formed themselves into an Association to support the government they systematically defied. Cumberland, by energy and competence, secured the throne of his family and welded to the dynasty a popular support that it had not previously had. Only one thing marred his achievement, the reputation he acquired for brutality in his treatment of the defeated rebels and their Highland bases. This aspect, indicated though not fully exposed here, gives the book its title.

Speck spends some time in showing that the brutality immediately after Culloden may have resulted from the forged Orders of the Day attributed to Lord George Murray, telling the Highland army to give no quarter. This "forgery" was grudgingly allowed to in

Cumberland's own Orders, but not so explicitly as to override the normal rules of war. The trouble was that the Highland army was not a foreign military force in Hanoverian eyes, but a group of rebellious citizens, and it was not clear where policing stopped and war began. Cumberland himself could hardly be expected to view the royal succession as an open political issue. The battle itself involved a dreadful level of slaughter and maiming in the Highland army. Neglect of the injured afterwards was not confined to the Jacobite troops, and brutality is an understandable reaction from the first men in a hundred years to stand up to and defeat a Highland charge. There was also pillage and violence wreaked on Highland communities during the ensuing months. This, though nowhere as severe as the effects of clan warfare in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, was resented by a population basically peaceful.

It is a pity that Speck does not spend more time on the Scottish side of his story. If we are to understand the mentality of Cumberland and his officers - for his roughness was matched by that of many others - we need to understand the nature of the Jacobite threat, and its basic causes. There is still, even after Bruce Lenman's recent work, *The Jacobite Rising, 1689-1746*, a need for research in this field. The Hanoverian army on its way north had suffered much from what Cumberland called "blatant disaffection". This was in the lowland north-east, and one might have hoped that Speck would try to explain it. When he observed the easy way in which Edinburgh fell to the Highland army he might also have considered whether the ambivalence of many of its citizens related to dissatisfaction with the working of the Act of Union. Ambivalence also existed in the Highland area. Even men here labelled as "loyal" had a part to play in the success of the rising at first. Macleod of Macleod and Macdonald of Sleat could have passed on the information that the Prince had indeed early enough for Cope's march north to have been in time, and let him over the Corrieblack before it was held by his opponents. Instead they sat on the fence for several days, and in the vacuum of power created by excessive legalism in Edinburgh and divided government in London, illegal force

The road to dereliction

By Bruce Lenman

ERIC RICHARDS:
A History of the Highland Clearances
Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions 1746-1885
332pp. Croom Helm. £12.95.
0 85664 496 X

The Highland Clearances occupy a prominent role in the popular view of Scottish history and indeed in the national consciousness of modern Scotland. Yet as Eric Richards points out, the 150 years or more which have passed since the Clearances began to be recognized as a major issue have seen the production of only a handful of serious works on the subject, and too many of them have been little more than a reworking of the first, and still indispensable, major account - Alexander Mackenzie's *The Highland Clearances*, first published in 1885. Mackenzie's work is largely a compilation of contemporary or near-contemporary sources, buttressed with a passionate indignation which makes his book to the Clearances what Bishop Forbes's *Lyon in Mourning* is to Scottish Jacobitism. Several of the more recent studies of the Clearance period in the Highlands have, however, been of very high quality. Malcolm Gray long ago limned the basic patterns of demographic and economic change. Philip Gaskell, in *Morvern Transformed* produced a model micro-study of one Highland region, and Jim Hunter's *Making of the Crofting Community* which was published in 1976, was very impressive. General study of the modern history of the



"Members of the Smashers' Club" by John Faed, from the book reviewed on page 387. The Smashers' Club was a sketching club founded in Edinburgh in 1848 by a group of artists, including John and Thomas Faed. At their meetings the members drew quick sketches of chosen subjects such as "Ambition", "Fear", or "Death", discussed theories of art and drank from toddy runners which had been autographed by each artist with a diamond.

could be used to force men to support the Prince. Speck has been rather too ready to listen to the myths and bogus history put out by sentimental Jacobitism in the nineteenth century. He refers to "ancient loyalties" of Highlanders to the house of Stuart, which sounds fine but has little relevance in the eighteenth century. More work on the reality in Scotland might have cleared up minor errors as well as major misunderstandings. He passes on the well worn story that the Highlanders, "when they learned that an English flower had been renamed Sweet William... nicknamed one of their most noxious weeds Stinking Billy". It is bold to donate an English phrase to a population mostly monoglot Gaelic

speakers, and Speck could have easily discovered that the name Sweet William dates back to the sixteenth century. The research that he has done - for instance in the Huntington Library - enriches parts of his story, but he simply has not done his homework on the Scottish scene. It should not be a cause for surprise that the rising led to local ruthlessness, even to a few executions; but that there was criticism of Cumberland's standard of humanity. A century and a half earlier it was almost routine for the government of Scotland to issue commissions of fire and sword against one or another Highland clan. By the time of the campaign of Montrose, the cultural divide between Highlands and Lowlands had become so deep that

each side took pride in slaughtering the other. The first breach in the determination of the Lowlanders to treat Highlanders as vermin came belatedly after the massacre of Glencoe when, partly for reasons of political advantage, the parliament of Scotland was brought to disapprove of this instance of "murder under trust". In the early eighteenth century, Edinburgh lawyers were anxious to see the assimilation of Highland to lowland society, on lowland terms. The criticism of Cumberland and his officers prepared the way for the later misplaced admiration for a primitive society, as evinced in the Ossian craze. There was a slow but real spread of standards of humanity in the eighteenth century, of which these events are witness.

Campaigning in Cuba

By Hugh Thomas

SONIA KEPPEL:
Three Brothers at Havana
120pp. Salsbury: Michael Russell.
£3.50.
0 85955 083 4

The British capture of Havana in 1762 at the end of the Seven Years' War does not usually figure very high in the roll of our past battle honours. Partly this is because, unlike the case with the victories of Quebec and Plassey earlier in that conflict, no permanent acquisition of territory followed. Indeed, Havana was handed back to Spain within a year, at the Peace of Paris, by a cabinet then dominated by the arch "wets" of the time, Lord Bute and Henry Fox, who had been pushed into power by George III in place of the "hawks", such as Pitt the Elder.

Partly this neglect of Havana derives from the muddled tactical execution of the operation by the general in command, the third Lord Albemarle, despite the strategic audacity of his scheme. There were, too, many deaths in the British forces in Cuba from disease rather than in combat - 4,708 died of malaria, yellow fever and other sicknesses in the weeks following the operations, as opposed to 560 killed or died of wounds. That is a not untypical proportion in tropical wars of the past, but the same it meant that the name of "the Havannah" (as we accurately translated "La Habana" until about 1900) sounded a sour note. Dr Johnson remembered the campaign primarily as the occasion when his doctor died, while Boswell was angry when he recalled Spain. Gilbert Elliot, the famous defender of Gibraltar in the 1780s, looked back on Havana as merely the place where he earned his reputation.

In Cuban and Spanish history, the fall of Havana is recalled as a great event. It was a defeat, no doubt, but

one which seemed for a hundred years to have brought benefits: access to British goods, slaves at cut prices from Jamaica and other British dominions, connections with British and North American merchants on a scale unprecedented during the old days of smuggling and the South Sea Company's wretched import quota. More recently, nationalistic Cuban historians have questioned whether the subsequent development of the Cuban economy can really be attributed primarily to the British capture of their capital. But, even so, 1962, the two-hundredth anniversary of the defeat, was the occasion, even in Castro's Cuba, then facing the missile crisis, for a fascinating series of volumes devoted to the events of so long before. In Spain, the defender of the Morro Castle, Luis Valcárcel, brave and unrelenting in battle, has given his name ever since to ships in the Spanish navy.

Sonia Keppel's new book about the capture of Havana is short, scholarly and readable: too short, I should say, given the richness of the material. She has made good use of a first-hand account of the battle written by Thomas Mant (or Mante), a mysterious military historian who may have been a French agent and who was once proposed as a candidate for the authorship of the *Letters of Junius*. The volume also reproduces several of the attractive prints based on the paintings made on the spot by the Gascon-born war artist to the expedition, Dominic Serres. As might be expected from a direct descendant of Lord Albemarle, she tells several engaging anecdotes about the three brothers who dominated the British attack: for not only was Albemarle commander-in-chief on land but his naval brother, the later celebrated Admiral Keppel, was second-in-command of the fleet. A third brother, William, was one of the two divisional commanders. All owed their position to being part of the Duke of Cumberland's "family" of officers. Each, according to eighteenth-century custom, sought, as Cumberland put it in a hasty letter of congratulations, an opportunity to make themselves as "rich as Cresus", from the booty of war. Sonia Keppel's descriptions of the battles are also clear, fresh and interesting.

My regrets are two: first, Sonia Keppel has no space to discuss the commercial consequences of the action, not only for Cuba, which were so considerable, but also for Britain. Regardless of the peace treaty so soon to follow, the fall of Havana to the great new industrial power led to the creation there of a commercial bazaar which diffused benefits throughout South America. The harbour filled with British merchant vessels. John Kenyon, the Unitarian commissary-general of the fleet, made a fortune (how great is not known), some of it invested in Rochdale, some in Jamaica. Other large profits were made by most of the merchants in Liverpool interested in the Atlantic trade, among them Charles Townsend's economic adviser, Samuel Touchett - a great cotton merchant who helped to finance Paul's spinning-machine.

A second omission is the consequences of the occupation for Havana's *criollo* leaders. We know from Spanish sources that certain Havana families such as the Montalvos and the Recios de Oquendo collaborated with the British. But how did that collaboration manifest itself? Where were the British billeted, how did they get on with the delightful Creoles of whose dances and religion they were suspicious but whose subsequent prosperity they helped to ensure? Sonia Keppel, unfortunately, has no space to devote to such interesting questions. Her ancestor, it must be granted, had little interest in such matters after the victory. He gained his prize money, of £122,679 10s 1d, a capital sum on which no doubt even a Keppel could jog along comfortably. He eventually invested half of it (£63,000) in an estate in Norfolk. Quidenham, previously owned by a great Lisbon merchant John Bristowe, who himself had once been Chairman of the South Sea Company. Quidenham today is a nursery; while Colimar, where Albemarle landed, is the site of the Ernest Hemingway Museum. On the other hand, Havana has since 1959 at long last returned apparently to Latin rule.

African adaptations

By Evelyn O'Callaghan

O. R. DATHOME:
Dark Ancestor
The Literature of the Black Man in the Caribbean
288pp. Louisiana State University Press. £12.
0 8071 075 3

Janet Jahn's *Bibliography of Neo-African Literature*, published in 1965, attempted to define stylistic criteria which would unite the literature of areas like the Caribbean, West Africa and parts of Europe and America into a definite corpus of black writing. He eventually conceded that these criteria are "still under discussion". O. R. Dathome's *Dark Ancestor* seems, initially, to be a similar undertaking. He attempts by painstaking research to reveal the common African heritage in the oral and written literature, proverb, music, song, dance and religious practices, of the English, Spanish, French and Portuguese Caribbean.

Dathome characterizes the survival of such African elements, albeit in adapted and syncretized forms, as the result of "primary transculturation" in which slaves in the Caribbean blended features of different ethnic cultures, and especially where contacts with Europeans were minimal, managed to preserve their traditions as an alternative to the "weary road to whiteness".

But, since "Afro-Caribbean man is not European, nor indeed is he African", a "secondary transculturation" has to take place, in which a specifically Caribbean identity emerges from the European-African conflation. This secondary synthesis is incomplete, and Dathome believes that it will be completed only after

an acceptance and reinterpretation of the black African legacy that slavery cruelly stimulated. Africa is explored in the literature of the region both as a real extension of experience from old world to new, and as a symbolic and mythical terrain of the imagination. His analysis covers novels such as *Cane* (1963) by the black American Jean Toomer, *Essai Yamba-O* (1933) by the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, and *Cumboto* (1969) by the Venezuelan Ramón Díaz Sánchez; poetry by Nicolás Guillén (Cuba), Edward Brathwaite (Barbados), and Derek Walcott (St Lucia); and a collection of oral narrative and song from all points on the Caribbean map. He eventually extends from "white" novels about Africa in 1668, through the writings of the Négritude and Harlem Renaissance movements in the 1920s, up to the present day.

The wideness of scope sometimes leads to disorganized presentation and repetition, but several important points emerge. One is that the African "ancestor" survives in all areas of Caribbean life, but had to be reclaimed in literature without recourse to any but European models. The achievement of Caribbean literature therefore lies in its "pliability of tradition", an openness to experimentation and influence. Another theme is the emergence of the mulatto as a symbol of cultural duality, Walcott's "neither ground nor ashamed bastard, this hybrid, this West Indian". And finally, he stresses the fact that a new identity and literary tradition necessitated a language adapted "to suit new experiences" that had never been part of the European culture - hence the growing popularity and prestige of Caribbean creole languages.

The American Bar

Saturday night in the American sector. A few lonely faces at empty tables. Bespectacled boys with short hair and Stations Plucking the ghingham cloths with weedy fingers. And the rest of the tables over-heavy. With whooping GIs and Berlin women. Shrieking for burgers and Southern Comfort.

Joe tries to pull his sweat-shirt over his stomach. And stretches to put on another record. Between the tables and the bar they shuffle. Along the edges of a clumsy square dance. Mothered by knees and manured hands. New York, Kentucky, L.A. - hemming in. A square of stained floor-boards in West Berlin.

Marion Lomax

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Nature notes and local lives

By Roger Garfitt

In *The Poet's Circuits*, first published in 1960 and republished last year to mark the centenary of his birth, Padraic Colum collected together his poems of Ireland and arranged them in eight thematic groups, reflecting the circuits that an itinerant poet might have made through the land in medieval times. What animates the poetry, however, is Colum's eye and ear for the sights and sounds of his own day, for "the stir of children with fresh dresses on" in the chapel yard, or the drover's cattle "in the darkness... slipping and breathing". The best poems are an evocation of Georgian Ireland, whose people Colum knew too well to idealize but whom he preferred to glimpse, as Edward Thomas glimpsed his Huxter, in their better moments. Even so, Georgian Ireland has a darker history than Georgian England, and there is the occasional figure, such as the "Spadesman", who is emblematic of that history:

But still, as though the fading light,
The spaded light, a spadesman wronged
He dug - the spade went down, and then,
Went down again: went down, went down...

The man upon the ridge alone,
The man with spade, the man hard-driven.

The poet's traditional role in the community, which is at least a living memory in Celtic countries, survived in England only in such figures as Samuel Laycock, the poet of the Lancashire "cotton panic" of the 1860s. In a useful introduction to his selection from Laycock's work, the first to appear this century, Glyn Hughes judiciously weighs Laycock's achievement as a dialect poet, with the intimate tone of a working man writing for his own people, against

PADRAIC COLUM:

The Poet's Circuits
Collected Poems of Ireland
with a preface by Benedict Kiely
150pp. The Dolmen Press, The Lodge, Mountbath, Portlaoise, Ireland. £6.
0 85105 390 4

SAMUEL LAYCOCK:

Selected Poems
Edited with an introduction by Glyn Hughes
Sunderland: Cooftith Press. £3.
0 904461 72 6

EVAN J. THOMAS:

The Solitary Place
32pp. Sparrow Press, The Old Co-op Shop, Mill Bank, Triangle, West Yorkshire. £1.50.
0 950764 0 5

his limitations: his lack, for example, of "radical spice". Nothing in his work has the anger or the immediacy of Mary Brookbank's lament for "the pair wee shifters" of the Scottish fute mills, which has now entered the Scottish folksong tradition. But Laycock's reflections on Tory foreign policy are a revelation of how one of the "two nations" viewed the other's imperialism, and his mimicry of Tory attitudes towards the Irish, neatly encapsulated in "hard lines" and "hard cheese", shows what an effective satirist he could have become, had he looked outward more often.

Evan J. Thomas came of a Welsh Baptist family who emigrated, when he was nine weeks old, to the West Yorkshire village of Hopton Hall. His affinity for this bleak moorland, in its Nonconformist rigour akin to Jack Clemo's feeling for the Cornish clays, fired his poetry, first published in 1931 as *Now At Eve* and now republished in a handsome selection, *The Solitary Place*. Thomas, who died at the age of twenty-seven, had little time to outgrow the conventions of traditional verse. But in the poems that directly invoke the elemental features of the landscape, in some small measure anticipating Ted Hughes's *Remains of Elmet*, it is striking how

STANLEY COOK:

Woods Beyond a Cornfield
and Other Poems
27pp. Rivelin Press, 24 Aireville Road, Bradford, Yorks. £1.
0 94525 28 0

PETER FORBES:

The Aerial Nociluca
Poems 1976-1980
23pp. Poet and Printer, 30 Grimsdyke Road, Hatch End, Middlesex. 90p.
0 900587 30 5

CHRISTOPHER WISEMAN:

The Upper Hand
52pp. Enitharmon Press, 22 Huntingdon Road, East Finchley, London, N2.
£3.75. (Paperback, £2.40).
0 905289 07 2

contemporary and individual his voice becomes. In *Woods Beyond a Cornfield*, a long poem written mostly in couplets (and the tighter the rhyme, the tighter the writing), Stanley Cook shrewdly sets the pastoral convention against the realities of small farms in the South Yorkshire of his youth, interweaving a perfect harvest with the story of a rape and murder of the kind that springs from deprivation. Published separately by Keepsake Press in 1979, it is accompanied in this Rivelin Press pamphlet by six new poems on related themes. These short pieces show Cook's characteristic humour and compassion now imbued with a more inward, meditative tone that the longer form has allowed him to develop, as in these lines "To John Clare":

Evening comes on and trees are dark
As a patch of damp; flowers from hem-
lock
And hedge parsley beaten down
By previous rain dim on the ground.
Nothing clear remains for me to measure
By shadows gather momentum towards
the night...

Writing of all-too-familiar themes, of moving shamefacedly into the middle years in the comfort of the Home Counties, Peter Forbes demonstrates how completely such materi-

RANDLE MANWARING:

The Swifts of Maggioro
69pp. Fuller d'Arch Smith, 37b New Cavendish Street, London W1.
£3.96.

ANNE ATKIN:

Words in Hook
36pp. Enitharmon Press. £1.05.
901111 53 8

PENELOPE PALMER:

The Lamp
48pp. Agenda Editions, 5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road, London, SW11. £2.40.
0 902400 28 2

KEVIN BORMAN:

Seasons in a Raw Landscape
27pp. Rivelin Press, 24 Aireville Road, Bradford, Yorks. £1.
0 904524 29 9

al can be transformed by invention and a little learning. The title poem, for instance, combines a November 5 bonfire with Joseph Wright's painting of an alchemist and Robert Boyle's name for the element phosphorus. *The Aerial Nociluca*. In "We Have Abolished The Dark" he is able to give an unexpected imaginative depth and verbal texture to what is, after all, no more than common observation:

Such dark furtive ways the old ones
had,
Suppliant, cringing behind the lace:
Drab stained wood, improving texts,
Antimacassars, the yellowing walls -
Heliore, workhouse, pot or plague.
The Horsemen were never so far away.
We in our turn have abolished the dark
With rushmat, wicker, pine and prints,
White paint, houseplants, stripped-down
wood...

It is the grey we shun, the grey and the
dun,
We shade it dark or light by turns;
Hersey, hubris, nemesis, pain.
The Horsemen are never so far away.

Such enterprise is sadly lacking in the work of Christopher Wiseman and Randle Manwaring. Years of teaching creative writing should have taught Wiseman to avoid the "sudden" formula: "But suddenly we know... so why, suddenly, do we feel...". He chooses the obvious

every time. Is there a crater? It will become "that scarred place inside me". A crab? It will put "giant claws around my heart". Only a few poems - "Family Reunion", "The Poet", "To a German Pilot", or, in a different voice, his "Seventieth Birthday" poem to Kathleen Raine - develop a kick that is not a reflex.

Randle Manwaring's title, *The Swifts of Maggioro*, has the unfortunate effect of advertising his poems of foreign travel, which are uniformly flatitudinous. He is rather better on English and Scottish landscapes, but the best when he gets away from landscape altogether, in laconic observation such as "Standing Committees" or "Emma Hardy and Vivien Eliot".

But no description, however vivid, or comment, however acute, can convey as much as a poem that is an intuitive extension of the understanding, whose meaning is not so much formed as still forming, in language sensitive to continuing ambiguities of thought and feeling. In Anne Atkin's "Reckful", for example, there is a description, but no fixity of description. The evening light becomes an experience that she enters:

I mark the afternoon leaving, light
weighing like wings a nothing the weight
of birds abandoning trees blurring the air
bitten on the same unaltered light...

Enter the stars. Old troops.
I've seen those lights before, that cannot
be the reason
I gaze before me and sing.

A similar quality can be found in the work of the late Penelope Palmer, particularly in the finely registered poems of love and separation:

Now I am other: rains uncover
As many songs as ever
But not the lineaments and music
I wait, and wait upon.

There are occasional intimations, too, in the work of Kevin Borman, in poems such as "Sirius & Beetroot Wine" or "Red Dusk". But he settles too easily for the Anglo-American free-verse diary-jotting style, which looks like a naked transcription of experience but is in fact just another set of mannerisms.

The fruits of time

By Tim Dooley

PETER LEVI:

Private Ground
69pp. Anvil Press Poetry. £3.25.
0 85646 080 X

The poems in Peter Levi's latest collection are, for the most part, untitled, and continue the system of numbering used in *Five Ages* (1978) and *Collected Poems 1955-1975*. The effect of this is to underline the suggestion that Levi's work is all of a piece, and to encourage the reader to see in the new volume an extension of the concerns of his previous poetry. Levi clarified those concerns in the introduction to his collected poems, where he said that what he wanted was "to be believed, not applauded", and amplified this statement in an article in *Agenda's* "Special Issue On Myth" (1977):

Poetry is some kind of human reasoning, and however multiple its reading of the world may be, it comes from the springs of all reasoning, even outside poetry. It has to be truthful within the possible limits of the language we all talk.

What Levi has attempted to be truthful about is summed up in a comparatively early poem, "The Tractor in Spring":

passing heaven I ever took for theme
this planet, its unnatural wishes,
common reason and human justice,
and growth of life, the last increase of time

In exploring these themes, Levi is scrupulously faithful not only in his descriptions of physical nature (writing of fruit-chestnuts in No 113 that "the fruit was confined, asleep") but in the care he takes to give the abstractions he deals with a recognizable physical and emotional setting. As he acknowledged in *Panicles for the Queen of Babylon* (1968), he finds it difficult to "keep proverbs out of (his) voice" and his writing is

shot through with resonant, if sometimes resistant, epigrams ("God is a kind of unenlightenment", from "Christmas Sermon" is a typical example). These resonant phrases can be deceptive. Their function is not to encapsulate and define, but to provoke feeling and thought. They serve a dramatic function in poems that tend to veer away from conclusion and certainty - poems less concerned with interpretations of experience than with the difficulty of making such interpretations. In Levi's exploration of his "planet" one rarely feels that an observation is being made to serve a preordained argument. Rather, like the central figure in his "Five Ages of a Poet", "He is a scholar reading from a tree / some innermost of dignity in trees."

The search for order in the flux of time has been a recurring obsession in Levi's work, and regret for the passage of time sounds an elegiac note through many of the poems in *Private Ground*. The first poem in the new collection recalls the certainties of religious faith in childhood as a "parody of perfect" which "sprinkled the infancy of God's elect". Time threatens the future as much as the past; No 248 reminds the reader how "the churchyard wall forgets if entertained at ease the light souls of poets, / the dark hearts of roses". Even the contemplation of the present reveals "the wealth of earth and the wealth of the sky / running to waste in the gutters of my mind" (No 258).

In the past Levi's poems have sought escape from this sense of flux in the incarceration of an idea from outside time: a revelation or a revolution. No 148 allows for both options: "God will make them come true in the street one day... And God shall fulfil this with his Amen." A change of gear can be felt in *Private Ground*, in the sense that time itself may be capable of producing solutions for the problems it sets. After reading this collection, it is difficult not to feel intimately acquainted with Levi's village garden:

its pear and plum trees, its wild cherries. Here the change of seasons demonstrates an order that needs no intellectual theory to support it, only "the motions of weather and of love". The "Five Short Moral Poems" which make up No 266 concentrate on immediate, animal reactions to the natural world. Where once, Stevens-like, Levi might have hoped for a supreme fiction which would hold decay in stasis, now:

Fiction withers away on the branch,
novels of wanderings in pure places
with waterpumps under towering trees,
gods at midday, adventurous dreams;
that is all ashes. Life, unexpected,
has offered the simplest solution.
There is no other place like this place.

"Comfort at Fifty", the most impressive of the longer sequences in *Private Ground*, underlines the commitment Levi now feels to the accidental beauties of nature, rather than the essential beauty of an ideal. These "antipolitical sonnets" contrast the pure but evasive quality of the world of spirit with the plural, and graspable, here and now. While these problems about what the mind knows / are too ragged to be penetrated, Levi finds the natural world's moralities clear and readable:

there are really books in the running
books
... on days when the swallows are
singing
moral good is the sun in his season
and the wet notes that the common birds
sing.

An unaffected attachment to the seasonal rhythms is matched here with an unabashed sensuousness and a calm treatment of traditional lyric forms. Levi has not compromised his high-principled view of the poet's calling, but his own vision has softened and become more tender in these recent poems, with the result that *Private Ground*, while still carrying the sense of authority that has recognized in his earlier work, will seem to many a warmer and more fully humane volume than any he has previously published.

Under the veneer

By William Scammell

PHILIP CALLOW:

Cave Light
43pp. Bradford: Rivelin Press. £1.50.
0 904524 32 9

CONNIE BENSLY:

Progress Report
63pp. Liskeard: Harry Chambers / Peterloo Poets. £3.
0 905291 29 8

Philip Callow's new poems are mainly of the tough-pastoral variety, celebrating foals, moors, cobwebs, blackberries, spiders, cats and the lovingly-evoked minutiae of English landscapes and seasons. Not that there is much that is nostalgic or cosy in the evocation - a river "works away like a glossy muscle" ("Soul Storage"); a foal "keeps a long head ducking / to the buckets of air" he pokes out a loose flap of rubber / in a shock of tombstone teeth

("Foal"); cobwebs are "slung across the dim yard one night / Like fairy spittle / The feistier-quiet angel-breath feel / Of unimaginably discreet kisses" ("Cobweb Gates, Fog Bodies"). Side by side with these Hughesian observations there emerges a somewhat riddling series of poems about domestic unhappiness:

"Was this the promised life?" the poet asks himself at one point. It's difficult to tell, because the experience in question is so sketchily described. Much the same thing happens in "Concealment", which tips toes up to the woe that is in marriage. "The tall cardboard box of her things / Has a large oil stove / Burning away concealed at the bottom / Where her violence and truth lives. / The flame is dangerous. I must get it out / ... It is mine after all." Could a large, lighted oil stove be concealed in a cardboard box, even a tall one? The metaphor is as confused as the nexus of feelings Callow is lunging at.

Occasional lines attack the misery head-on: "I smell the cooking when I come in / We are having catharsis for dinner"; "You make a dark red snail for breakfast / Which I am forced to eat"; "I want you to bleed". But both domestic and nature poems suffer, too often, from confusion and haste, as though we were being offered notes for poems rather than the finished article. The "bald almost baby / Wobbling and rooming her eyes everywhere in / A bliss and slouch of unknowing" ("A Pock-etch of Apple Leaves") is good, but the comparison between a frightened spider in its web and "the cat on warm earth all sluttish / That feeds its white fur to the sun" ("Noontide") is not at all convincing; and somehow this oscillation between bull's-eye and wild miss permeates the whole collection.

Much the best poem in the book is "Cave Pictures", a resonant bringing-together of vivid description and baffled longing which powerfully unites themes clumsily groped at throughout the other pieces. It too might be accused of confusion, certainly of obliquity, but the feelings it generates and explores are real.

Harry Chambers's Peterloo Poets Press is coming to resemble a poetic Open University, or a second-chance Helicon, in which ladies of a certain age - Elms Mitchell, U. A. Farnthorpe, Elizabeth Bartlett, Anna Adams, and now Connie Bensley - learn their trade and take an astringent look at the world about them. Many of them seem to work in or about the medical or one of the "caring" professions. Was it Miss Farnthorpe, or someone else, who said that social workers are the new war poets? Connie Bensley, who has worked as a doctor's secretary, both conforms to the type and stands up for her own commonsensical feet.

She is at her best when she sticks closely to particulars, as in "Cardiac Department":

Discrete, disconsolate,
The heart patients gather in the waiting
room.
Drawn together, but facing apart
And thinking about their ECGs.
The cleaner is having a mysterious mid-morning clean.

"Don't move love," she says.
"Don't move. I can dust round you."
That is all the more effective for its quiet exactitude, and the poet's tact in "selecting" the homely words as a jeweller sets a stone. She uses a similar technique in "Dig", where the gravedigger, "transmuted by his side", gravely informs her "You need a bit of a song... / When you're working to a deadline." Elsewhere she's a touch peremptory or obvious, as in the title-poem ("Wrong again, God / You should have given us glands with built-in obsolescence, / Or better quality bodywork"), or in this stanza of "Annual Dinner":

Before the dancing we had the speeches,
And that was a powerful thing,
of several best-faithed speeches
initiated with coffee and brandy,
where the redundancy of the second sentence rather destroys the laconic wit of the first. Other poems have a Larkinesque shapeliness and humour ("Permissive Society", "Synopsis", "Willpower"), others still a memorable intelligence: "Scratch under the veneer: there's more veneer". There's more than veneer to the best of these.

Poems for Roy Fuller on his Seventieth Birthday (Sycamore Press, 4 Benson Place, Oxford. £1.50) contains poems by Jack Clark, Aedma Clear, John Fuller (who in *terra rima* pays tribute to the "Roman (tone) and Roman virtue" of his father's verse), Alan Lehmann, Anthony Powell, Alan Ross, Stephen Spender, Julian Symonds ("In Blackheath and misty Walmer/Wo sit at slithered ease") and Anthony Thwaite, who reflects, "Past fifty, is the New always emetic? At seventy, perhaps one thinks of heaven."

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Mastering the market

By John Register

GEOFFREY ELLIS:
Napoleon's Continental Blockade
The Case of Alsace
355pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £17.50.
0 19 821881 8

More than twenty years ago W. H. Chaloner concluded a review of François Crouzet's monumental work on the effects of the Napoleonic Blockade of Great Britain with the question: what were the effects of the Blockade on the economy of Napoleonic Europe? To Geoffrey Ellis must now go some of the merit of having provided a reply to that question. In his book he sets out to describe the Blockade, not in the traditional terms of a "cost system" or a war machine directed against Britain, but in terms of its effects on the heartland of Europe. In his view, "the caricature of Napoleon playing King Canute with the tide of British trade needs to be redrawn". He presents the Blockade more as what he calls a "market design" than as a war-machine, though he is careful to add that "the implication, emphatically, is not that the market objectives were more important than the military ones, nor that the inland areas were necessarily more crucial than the maritime ports". He simply wants to redress the balance.

In pursuing this aim Dr Ellis could not hope to tackle Napoleonic Europe as a whole but only a part of it, if an important part: the Rhenish regions and the role there of that key

exchange town, Strasbourg. He proceeds with caution, even more so because he is aware that agriculture was still the basis of the European economy in general and of the Alsatian economy in particular, and he is himself concerned mainly with industry and commerce. The introduction to his book and its first chapter (on Alsace and the central government, 1803-07) should be recommended reading for all students of the period. Ellis finds that the pre-revolutionary "golden age" of Strasbourg dear to contemporaries was largely a myth: the town's river trade was endangered by a dispute with Mainz and by competition from Kehl, while the textile industries of Alsace suffered from dwindling exports on the eve of the Revolution. Also, he challenges the view that the Revolution's effects on the Alsatian economy were universally disastrous; but more of this in a moment, for to understand his argument, one needs to see what he means by the "market design".

Lacking an economic predominance on the continent commensurate with their military and political mastery, the French tried to build one in the years 1805-07. The idea behind the "market design" is traced back to Delacroix, Sleyts, Merlin de Douai and, chiefly, Montgaillard. Broadly viewed, the idea was to establish a cordon of markets to serve the interests of French merchants and manufacturers, while at the same time creating tributaries "to boost the flow of revenue for the French national needs". The difficulty arose from the fact that, while France was supreme in Europe in 1806-07, she was also land-locked (being cut off by the British from the

open sea and from her former colonies). Nevertheless, could she become a British competitor of Europe and could British competition be eliminated from continental markets? Ellis dismisses the notion that the Blockade was primarily a "war on cottons", aimed at switching the French over to linen: cotton was fashionable, and Napoleon's Blockade was a war on behalf of his cottons against those of British, Swiss and German origin. But the long-term aims of the Blockade and of its "market design" were more wide-ranging: in Ellis's words, "it was to be at once the executioner of British industrial and commercial supremacy and the harbinger of a new economic order of things in Europe." Outside Italy and Spain, it was in Germany that the French hoped to develop their "markets of replacement" (with particular emphasis on trade links with Frankfurt and Leipzig, as these were still the main internal centres of distribution for industrial goods in central and northern Europe).

The cost of the operation was great on the subject states of the Empire, as the French imposed conditions favourable to their own trade and consumers. Breaking point was reached in 1810-11, when the great financial crisis got under way. However, some of the industrial achievements had a more lasting and beneficial effect. After the broad sweep of the first half of the book, the remaining chapters on Alsace itself are rather pedestrian. Although Ellis is able to show that the region underwent a period of economic expansion from 1807 to 1810 with the industries of Eastern France developing quickly, he does little to enliven

his account of this significant process. With something of the grim determination of those peasant women who force-feed geese in order to make *paté*, Ellis inflicts the contents of his file-cards on the reader. The result is a welter of facts and figures about wines, tobacco, tanneries, clock-making, and *toiles peintes* (with a further twenty pages in the form of appendices to be digested at leisure). The reader begins to greet with some relief statements like that on page 183: "the key indicator of industrial momentum in the Haut-Rhin was calico-printing, and I have found no solid evidence in the pre-federal statistics of any marked arrest of the expansionary trend during the second half of 1808." (Fortunately is not a typical example of the author's style.)

In making the "land aspects" of the Blockade more prominent than its "sea aspects" in this important book, Dr Ellis has not only redressed the balance, but also shown us the Blockade was not an unqualified failure. If the sample chosen, namely Alsace, may appear insufficient, the fault is not the author's. He has shown the way, as Crouzet did before him; others will now have to look at Italy, Spain, and the remaining parts of Napoleonic Europe to test further the validity of his stimulating conclusions.

The festive spirit

By Richard Mackenney

EDWARD MUIR:
Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice
356pp. Princeton University Press.
£12.45.
0 691 05325 1

Public ritual is an important aspect of the myth of Venice, the myth of the perfect constitution which ensured political and social stability, and Edward Muir's book on the subject has been eagerly awaited. But *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* is, alas, a disappointment.

Professor Muir's theme is the construction by the Venetian patriciate of a political ideology through the "sophisticated manipulation" of public ceremonial. In civic ritual, Muir finds the philosopher's stone which transmuted Venetian history into Venetian myth, but he fails to convince because myth and ritual bulk so large in the book and reality so little. The early assertion that "myth is no less real than the empirical facts of economic and social history" is respectable enough, and such an approach might have produced exciting insights, but when discussing a myth, it is fatal to ignore social and economic realities if it is to be properly understood.

Muir argues that "the early growth of Venice had probably encouraged parish-consciousness" and concludes that the parishes lost a protracted struggle with "the central city of St Mark" which "competed for the attention of the populace". This is pure speculation. The significance of the parochial unit in Venetian, Italian, or even European life before the Counter-Reformation is difficult to establish, and claims that parishes were "a major source of public life" should be treated with caution. Some Venetian confraternities (*scuole piecole*, not *scuole piccole* as they appear here in the text) certainly drew members from all over the city. The evidence used by Muir is a parish festival of obscure origin, the "Festa delle Marie", which became a public procession in the fourteenth century. The author asserts that this development was the result of an attack on parochial traditions by the centralizing patriciate, but he cites no government decision to support this view, merely laws which aimed at eliminating the disorders that accompanied the festivities. The early ceremony may well have changed, but the "socially meaningful relationship" to the city (the dual procession was the constitution).

A basic weakness is Muir's failure to confront the serious problems posed by the evidence he draws on. Are descriptions of festivals from different eyes in different epochs and in different records forms a valid index of change? Can we be sure that Venetian ceremonial had become increasingly courtly by the late sixteenth century? Are the comments of well-born Venetians like Cardinal Contarini, or the diarist Sanudo, or those made by honoured outsiders like Petrarch and Sir Henry Wotton, our best guide to the significance of public ritual? Were such observers more easily taken in by patrician propaganda than was the mass of the population? A discussion of source materials might well have replaced the first fifty-five pages of the text which are devoted to a discussion of the myth of Venice drawn almost exclusively from secondary sources among which the works of social anthropologists are more prominent than useful. Techniques borrowed from other disciplines may be used to supplement the historian's archival research but they cannot be expected to replace it.

Had Muir not neglected the social and economic realities of Venetian life like this, his political perspective might have been rather different. It is only too easy to see the controlling hand of the patriciate in everything after all, its power was never seriously threatened by those whom it ruled. But does this make Venice into a champion of "republican values"? Much of Muir's argument falls down because, like the patriciate itself, he is not interested in what the populace has to say. In his book the people merely gawk at display which at once bemuse them and reconcile them to their political impotence.

Ordinary people were certainly encouraged to feel a sense of solidarity as both Christians and Venetians. They were given rights of "status association" (rather than "reversal") in public festivals and their excesses were carefully controlled by laws or frozen at the end, an entertainment to develop a resort for winter holidays, a few people gather for gossip, dinner or television. The heroine, who holds herself responsible for the loss of the child - has a kind of breakdown, while her neighbour, an ageing loner who is steeped in the ways of the place, gradually loses his teeth. These events seem to bring the two characters together, and if there is a story I suppose it is the story of their mutual attraction.

FICTION

Letting down daddy

By Michael Hofmann

WALTER ABISH:
How German Is It
252pp. Manchester: Carcanet New Press. £6.95.
0 85635 396 5

Walter Abish's last novel, *Alphabetical Africa*, worked with de- and then re-construction. Tony Tanner expounded it in *Granta*:

In chapter A, only words beginning with A can be used ("Africa again: Albert arrives, alive and arguing about African art, about African angst and also, alas, about Ashanti architecture, as author again attempts an agonizing alphabetical appraisal"); then in

chapter B words beginning with B and A can be used, in chapter C, words beginning with C, B, A and so on. Then we are taken backwards through the alphabet, returning to A once more.

How German Is It seems more conventional, but it too reveals traces of a tight mechanical organization - albeit one that is formal and conceptual, rather than sheerly alphabetical. At many points, the book reminded me of a spiral poetic form such as the *sestina* or *terza rima*. Certain words recur at intervals throughout the book, in different contexts that give them almost a punning sense - as happens in the *sestina*. Thus Dürer's name occurs as a valid reason for visiting Germany; as a subject for study; and in "a Dürerlike face" in a crowd. It transpires, moreover, that not only did the hero's family at one time possess "six drawings and

watercolours by Dürer", but the hero also claims to be descended from the artist himself. Other recurring words and names include the magazine *Truise*, the philosopher Brumhold, "Schwarzwalder Kirschtorte", familiarity and summer. These emerge as landmarks in Abish's scaled-down, fictionalized model of Germany.

The two principal figures are the two Hargenau brothers - Abish's nomenclature throughout is derivative - Ulrich, a writer with left-wing sympathies, and Helmut, a fashionable architect. The other *drumatis personae* are a score of friends, relatives, friends' relatives and so on. It would be hopeless to attempt to list them - not because the book is in any way confusing or hard to follow, but because the inevitable interconnectedness of people is one of the sinister hallmarks of Abish's fiction.

It seems that everyone either knows everyone else already, or gets to meet them very soon. When a new character is introduced - like Franz, the Hargenau's former manservant, or Egon and Gisela, a swinging jet-set couple - we already know who they are, and what other characters, in the lives of the other characters. Thus, even as the plot expands to take in more incidents and relationships, what the reader feels is a growing sense of claustrophobia. *How German Is It* resembles a nightmarish detective story in which Ulrich, the seeker after truth, finds himself powerless and irrelevant for long stretches, and, suddenly, intermittently, turned on by what he thought he was pursuing. While many outsiders hint at coming to family, with the appearance of further characters, bizarre twists and coincidences, the real story becomes more and more simple until finally Ulrich is seen as the representative of a generation that is guilty of a massive Oedipal betrayal.

Having himself turned state evidence and put a group of terrorists behind bars, Ulrich realizes that he is diametrically opposed to his father - one of the heroic officers who conspired against Hitler and were put to

death in 1944; that he is, in some sense, party to his execution. In his collusion with a modern Germany intent on suppressing the past, he has aligned himself with Nazism. The book ends with Ulrich telling a psychiatrist that he feels he is not his father's son, and, under hypnosis, raising his right arm in a salute.

With his ever-extending web of characters and his recurring emblems of prosperity - for that is what the pivotal "sestina" words have in common - Walter Abish describes a society that is ready to sink under the weight of its own pretence, its challenging emptiness matches the audacity of Abish's writing, his summoning of significant incident from the post-modernist's bag of tricks, with a complete absence of conventional fiction's efforts at *vraisemblance*: "One day, after a particularly heavy downpour the pavement in front of the Karl-Mainz bakery on the Gellgenheimer Strasse in Brumholdstein caved in, exposing a ruptured sewage pipe." In this clever fiction, as in modern Germany, nothing is accidental. Abish continues - in sentences that echo the evasion of war-guilt - "Things like that were bound to happen. They could happen anywhere. No one was really to blame."

Glad you're not here

By Roger Scruton

JOANNE MESCHERY:
In a High Place
303pp. Bodley Head. £7.50.
0 370 30444 6

The action of Joanne Meschery's first novel is set in the mountain country between California and Nevada, and purports to offer an evocation of the hardness and vulnerability of the place and of the discipline which it brings to the life of a divorced woman who moves there from the beach-pots of the coast. Very little happens in the book: a child is lost in snow at the beginning and found frozen at the end, an entertainment to develop a resort for winter holidays, a few people gather for gossip, dinner or television. The heroine, who holds herself responsible for the loss of the child - has a kind of breakdown, while her neighbour, an ageing loner who is steeped in the ways of the place, gradually loses his teeth. These events seem to bring the two characters together, and if there is a story I suppose it is the story of their mutual attraction.

The novel is written from the viewpoint now of one of them, now of the other: a device which, despite having had the benefit of the Stanford Writing Programme, the Yaddo Corporation, the Iowa Writers Workshop, and the National Endowment for the Arts, all acknowledged in the foreword, Meschery handles with a certain clumsiness - landing herself, in the scenes when the two are together, with simultaneous but emotionally and dramatically incommensurate points of view. Indeed, if this book is anything to go by, it is clear that American creative writing courses do not teach much about literature.

Meschery follows certain rude precepts - no telling, only showing; masses of detail; short dialogue punctuated by "he muttered", "she mumbled", "he argued", rather than "he said"; abrupt transitions; any number of scene changes. But the style is dull, there are no striking phrases or images, and it is hard to keep one's attention focused on the book, since, despite the abundance of detail, there is no true evocative-ness: many things are described, but nothing is observed, partly because nothing is imagined: "The boy waved towards the station, then followed Deegan inside, still jabbering about

the mountains. Deegan dialled Ren's number, trying to think of what he should say. But Lily's sister answered the phone as if she'd been waiting all morning for his call and knew every detail..."

Only the names reveal which character is speaking or acting, since none of them has a tone of voice or a distinctive manner. This would perhaps have mattered less had there been some interesting state of mind pervading the novel. After all, no character of Kafka's has a tone of voice or mode of action that is not generated independently, by the flush of anxiety that streams through the writing. But Meschery's prose has all the vagueness and imprecision of the experience that she tries to convey. It is, presumably, significant for a divorced woman that she should have settled with her children among beautiful mountains and simple people, bearing the afflictions of an urban past. Yet this experience is never evoked; the reader gains only a sense of the profound ordinariness of these television-sodden backwoods, whose beauty and isolation seem no more humanly significant than a picture postcard, sent with the words "Having a dull time. Glad you're not here."

Aboard the longboat

By J. K. L. Walker

KEITH DEWHURST:
The Captain of the Sands
391pp. Cape. £7.50.
0 224 01619 9

Slavery and its impact on the character of an English boy growing to manhood during the middle years of the eighteenth century are the twin themes of Keith Dewhurst's first novel. Tom Derker's harsh childhood on a bleak Yorkshire hill farm ends abruptly when he is orphaned in horrifying circumstances and passes into the care of his Uncle William, master of a slave ship. Together, they set sail for West Africa, where their mutual affection comes under complex strains as the hunt for slaves, first on the Gambia and then a thousand miles south on the Windward Coast, develops. Dingwall, second mate of the *Margaret*, gentlemanly, alcoholic, struggling to keep his soul amid the brutality and degradation, emerges as the polar opposite to the realistic William Derker, but finally gives way to despair and dies at the captain's hand. Tom himself suffers equally when Derker (by now revealed as his true father) seduces an adolescent African girl, fourathings, for whom Tom has developed a self-love.

On this emotional framework Dewhurst builds the rest of his novel. As the action shifts to Antigua, where those slaves "that have survived the Middle Passage are sold off to the plantation owners, Tom abandons the *Margaret* and her captain (whom he meets again four years later in tragic circumstances) and plunges into a fresh series of adventures, first as pot-boy in a brothel, then as clerk on the Hanson plantation. Here his unrequited feelings for a daughter of the house come in the end to seem of less account than his growing appetite for black girls - an urge that the complicated interrelationships of Colonel Hanson's alternative families, white and mulatto, reveal to be a potent factor in the story of the island. For Tom too, it remains an enduring appetite. Safely back home, he acknowledges the violence that thus finds its outlet. Because he has taken his feelings to the limit "where human flesh is bought and sold" he is a "wounded person" who resembles one of those overzealous who on the Windward Coast "put their black brothers into the longboats: the Captains of the Sands, as they are called, who send others into hell but save themselves. I am every day a Captain of the Sands. I wish that I were Henry Dingwall, but I am not brave enough."

The tale, however, is never in any danger of developing into a morality. Rather, Dewhurst's social and psychological insights serve to add body to a full-blooded adventure story, conceived on the grand scale. Spread across three continents and a seven-year time-span, with their constantly changing settings and huge cast of characters, the adventures of Tom Derker are an impressive demonstration of the narrative talents that have earned Dewhurst his reputation as one of the most professional of British television dramatists.

The Anglo-Welsh Review Number 70, 1982 (edited by Gillian Clarke and Greg Hill, 138pp. Five Arches Press. £1.25, 0003 3405) includes an article, "Channels of Grace: A View of the Earlier Novels of Elym Humphreys", by Roland Mathias and nineteen unpublished letters from W. H. Davies to Edwards Thomas.

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Lock up this summer in a casket of hay
In a tower of sand in the wind's embrace
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Remember like a scent like a name forgotten
Like a healing sign.

Anne Pennington

Anne Pennington, the distinguished scholar and translator, died in May last year. This poem was found among her papers.

مكتبة الصل